

Safety and health alert

07/01 Use of portable generators

Incident

A person was fatally injured while attempting to recharge the batteries on a truck using a portable generator and unsafe battery charging leads.

Factors

1. The battery was still connected to the truck's electrical system.
2. The 12 volt charging leads were plugged into the 240 volt outlet of the generator.
3. Investigations revealed the plug was of a configuration that allowed it to fit either the 12 volt or 240 volt outlets on the generator.

Recommendations

- If the 12 volt socket outlet for battery charging has a configuration that will permit the insertion of a 240 volt plug, then it is illegal to use the generator unless it has been modified by an authorised electrical repair agent.
- If the battery charging leads have a plug that can be inserted into a 240 volt AC socket, then it is illegal to use them and they must be destroyed and replaced with a lead that has a plug which matches the correct 12 volt socket-outlet of the generator.
- Read manufacturer's instructions and comply with warnings on portable electric equipment.
- Avoid running portable generators in an enclosed area. This is an extremely hazardous practice as Carbon Monoxide gas can build up, or there may be a risk of fire from spilt fuel vapours or other combustible material.
- Locate generator such that it avoids the need for long extension leads.
- Stop engine when connecting or disconnecting leads or electrical equipment and when refuelling.
- Ensure charging leads are connected to the correct outlet on the generator. Follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Maintain safety precautions with appliances and accessories as for use on normal reticulated mains supply.
- Ensure batteries are removed from the vehicle during charging.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

Date: March 2001

A413123



Department of Consumer
and Employment Protection
Government of Western Australia

