



# Backup batteries for power outages

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Batteries and generators both provide the same basic service but are considerably different devices. We'll sort through the pros and cons of each. Here's what you need to know to decide between the two.

Offering the full suite of Generac's gas powered generators and rechargeable backup batteries, Canter Power Systems has been providing back-up power options for 70 years and is now the largest full-service generator installer in the nation. These products or services have not been evaluated by CNET's editorial staff. If you get an estimate or make a purchase through this link, we may receive a commission.

Home battery backup systems, like the Tesla Powerwall or the LGES 10H and 16H Prime, store energy, which you can use to power your house during an outage. Batteries get that electricity from your home solar system or the electrical grid. As a result, they're much better for the environment than fuel-powered generators. They also might be better for your wallet.

Separately, if you have a time-of-use utility plan, you can use a battery backup system to save money on your electricity bill. Instead of paying high electricity rates during peak usage hours, you can use energy from your battery backup to power your home. In off-peak hours, you can use your electricity as normal -- but at a cheaper rate -- and recharge your battery when it costs less.

If you have solar panels, you'll be able to store any excess electricity generated by your solar panels. This stored electricity can be used to power your home during the nighttime and periods of panel inefficiency.

Virtual power plants, where you give up a bit of control over your battery's charge to your utility or another third party, are increasingly available. By giving up some access to the energy stored in your battery, you can earn a bit of money.

On the other hand, standby generators connect to your home's electrical panel and kick on automatically when the power goes out. Generators run on fuel to keep your electricity on during an outage -- typically natural gas, liquid propane or diesel. Other generators have a "dual fuel" feature, meaning that they can run on either natural gas or liquid propane.

Certain natural gas and propane generators can connect to your home's gas line or propane tank, so there's no need to refill them manually. Diesel generators, however, will need to be topped up in order to keep running.

With battery backups, you'll need to pay for the backup battery system upfront, as well as installation costs (each of which are in the thousands). Exact pricing will vary based on which battery model you choose



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and how many of them you need to power your home. However, it's common for an average-size home battery backup system to run between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

For generators, the upfront costs are slightly lower. On average, the price of purchasing and installing a standby generator can range from \$7,000 to \$15,000. However, remember that generators require fuel to run, which will increase your operating expenses. The specific costs will depend on a few factors, including the size of your generator, which type of fuel it uses and the amount of fuel used to run it.

Battery backups earn a slight edge in this category since they can be mounted to the wall or floor, whereas generator installations require a bit of additional work. Regardless, you'll need to hire a professional for either type of installation, both of which will require a full day of work and may cost several thousand dollars.

On the other hand, generators can be quite noisy and disruptive when they're in use. They also emit exhaust or fumes, depending on which type of fuel they use to run -- which may irritate you or your neighbors.

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