

A FEW FATAL ERRORS

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Two Marines service a similar generator.

With Marines performing missions forward-deployed in areas without power, the use of generators, both civilian and military, is rather common. The risks surrounding the use of generators must be considered in ORM so hazards are mitigated. Complacency, poor procedures, and maintenance change generators from a source of power into a potentially fatal hazard.

A Marine was killed while performing a simple test of a generator and floodlight set. Here's how it happened:



Improper wiring connection on mishap generator: red wire is power lead, green wire is ground.

A trailer-mounted portable generator (Generator Set, Diesel Engine, MEP 803A) was fitted with a floodlight set (Floodlight Set, SM-4A3-0) for use during an upcoming exercise. Two Marines were tasked to perform an operational test to ensure the equipment was “good to go” before sending it to the field. The generator was in an equipment yard, placed near a chain-link fence, awaiting final transport to the exercise area.

The maintenance personnel started the generator and closed the breakers to turn on the floodlights. One Marine stood at the breaker panel, and the other stood at the operator control panel at the end of the generator, with his back to the fence that was less than two feet away. The generator did not need to be placed so close to the fence, because there was ample room in the lot. When the “main” breaker was closed, one of the lights began to flicker, and the Marine at the breaker panel jumped back, saying that he'd been shocked. The Marine