



**City of Carmel-by-the-Sea  
Building Safety Division  
Standard Operating Guidance (SOG)  
19- 02 Generators**

**Background**

The private use of back-up generators is an increasingly popular feature being added to homes and businesses in the City. Such generators can be an important safety element during a power outage by maintaining power to sump pumps, fire pumps, medical equipment, and heating and cooking appliances. Such generators also present concerns for both public safety and public peace and repose. For these reasons the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea regulates the installation of back-up and emergency generators in the City. This SOG provides guidance on the permitting and approval of generators on private property.

**Citations**

- Carmel Municipal Code 8.56.020 – Definitions
- Carmel Municipal Code 17.28.020 – Noise from Electrical and Mechanical Equipment
- Carmel Municipal Code 15.36 – Electrical Code
- Carmel Municipal Code 15.55 – Fire Code

**Definitions**

- “Back-up Generator” refers to a generator installed to provide power to building systems during a power outage that is not required by code or regulation.
- “Class D noise” includes unnecessary, unnatural or unusual noises or sounds created by means of human voice or animal outcry, or by any other means or methods which are so annoying, or which are so harsh or prolonged, as to be injurious to the health, peace and comfort of any reasonable person of normal sensitiveness working, residing or otherwise occupied in the area.
- “Emergency Generator” refers to a generator required by code or regulation to be installed to provide power to critical building systems such as fire pumps, alarm systems, emergency lighting, etc. during a power outage.

**Guidance**

Generators are regulated by the Carmel Municipal Code (CMC) to ensure their safe installation and operation; and to reduce noise and other impacts on neighboring property. The CMC under Title 17 requires that generators and any structure surrounding them be located on the property in accordance with the setbacks prescribed under CMC 17.10.030 and Table 17.10-A

Table 17.10-A: Setback Standards for R-1 District					
Lot Type	Front Setback(in feet)	Rear Setback* (in feet)	Side Setbacks		
			Composite** (both sides)	Minimum Setbacks (in feet)	
				Interior Side	Street Side
Interior Site	15	15	25% of site width	3	N/A
Corner Site	15	15	25% of site width	3	5
Resubdivided Corner Site	10	15	25% of site width	3	9
Double-Frontage Site	15	N/A	25% of site width	3	5 (if applicable)

\* The rear setback is three feet for those portions of structures less than 15 feet in height.

\*\* See CMC [17.10.030\(A\)\(1\)](#) and [17.06.020](#), Rules of Measurement

Title 17 further regulates generators to protect neighbors and the community from the adverse impacts of noise coming from operating generators. Title 17.28.020, Noise from Electrical and Mechanical Equipment states:

“The fixed installation of any electrical or mechanical equipment such as generators for electrical power, pumps for hot tubs, swimming pools, fountains or wells, heating or air conditioning systems and similar equipment shall be located, shrouded, muffled or otherwise treated to control noise to protect the use and enjoyment of neighboring properties and the public. All such installations shall be limited to a noise emission standard of 60 db or three db above ambient whichever is greater, as measured at the property boundary. Use of electrical power generators shall be limited to periods when electrical power from the utility is not available. During such periods generators should be run intermittently to the extent practical to minimize the disturbance of neighbors. Excessive noise from such installations shall be treated as a Class D noise per Chapter [8.56](#) CMC. (Ord. 2004-02 § 1, 2004; Ord. 2004-01 § 1, 2004)”

The owner/contractor responsible for a generator project is required to have a licensed engineer or special inspector certify, in writing, that the generator complies with the noise limitations prior to final approval of a generator installation.

Finally, generator installations require an Electrical Permit from the City’s Building Safety Division. To obtain such a permit the applicant must submit a complete an Electrical Permit application; a site plan showing the location of the generator with respect to property lines and other structures on the subject property; manufacturer’s cut sheets and specifications on the proposed generator, including noise levels produced by the unit; manufacturer’s cut sheets and specifications on any other appurtenances such as automatic transfer switches; and a wiring diagram showing how the generator connects with the buildings electrical system.

#### **Additional Requirements for Emergency Generators**

The City fire code and applicable NFPA Standards require that emergency generators be installed where fire and life safety systems rely on electrical power for protection of the premises. This includes such systems and features as fire alarm systems, fire pumps required for sprinkler and/or standpipe systems, emergency lighting, ventilation systems and environmental controls related to hazardous materials storage and use, etc. Emergency generators require periodic testing and inspections as described in NFPA 110. Testing and inspections are required to be performed by an individual certified and licensed for performing such work, and a log and report of testing and inspections shall be maintained on the site and made available to the City and Fire Department upon request.