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Residential Standby Power

Case History

Where:

Fairfield, Connecticut

What:

RS20A residential air-cooled generator set

Purpose:

Provide standby power for a home

Primary choice factors:

- Reliability
- Reputation
- High-tech features

Connecticut homeowner receives quality product, quality experience from start to finish from Tower Generator and Cummins Onan

The background

The homeowner is a retired banker living in Fairfield, Connecticut. A number of power outages in his area had him concerned about protecting his home, especially when he was in Florida, where he spends part of each year. So the homeowner researched residential standby generators, which led him to Cummins Onan and Tower Generator, the dealer serving southwest Connecticut.

The education and planning

Chris Atiyeh from Tower Generator arranged to meet with the homeowner and explain what was involved in installing a residential generator system. For instance, the size of a home standby system is determined by

which electrically powered items the homeowner would like a generator to run. The homeowner wanted the generator to power most of his 5,000-square-foot house, including one or two of the home's three central air conditioning units.

The preparation

Tower Generator conducted a thorough site survey of the property, taking into account necessary clearances from windows, vents and combustible materials. A suitable location was identified to site the generator.



The fuel for the generator was to be natural gas, since the homeowner already used it to heat his home. Tower determined that the home had a high-pressure gas system available and coordinated the upgrade with the local gas utility to ensure proper operation for the new generator system.

The recommendation: Cummins Onan Model RS20A



After the site survey, Tower reviewed the available products that might fit the homeowner's requirements and recommended the RS20A air-cooled model. Because the homeowner had done some homework of his own, he inquired about the high-tech capabilities of this model, especially the Internet-based remote monitoring.

Tower showed him a portfolio of their previous residential projects, including customer testimonials and endorsements. This review helped the homeowner decide that Tower not only had the right system for his home, but also had experienced, well-trained people who could perform the installation to the highest standard.

The project

Late in 2010, Tower started the process of obtaining the necessary permits and approvals. Because the RS20A was relatively new, Tower also consulted with engineers from Cummins Onan to ensure that the Tower team was completely familiar with the nuances of both the installation and features for this model, including the email notification capability.

The next step was to coordinate the gas meter upgrade and to install a concrete pad. The pad is not a necessity, because the RS20A comes with a hard rubber base, but Tower prefers concrete pads for a premium result.



The transfer switch and the digital display being installed.



The RS20A being configured; the gas line has been connected. Piping can be installed under or above ground, depending on local codes.

Tower then brought the RS20A unit to the site, wired the appropriate connections to the transfer switch and the home's electrical distribution panel, and installed the piping to deliver the natural gas. The system was then tested, commissioned and put online.

The advanced control features

The homeowner liked the convenience and peace of mind offered by the high-tech features of the RS20A. First, the unit offers a digital display interface to easily program and communicate with the generator from inside the home. In this case, the digital display was installed next to the transfer switch in the basement.



What's more, the RS20A provides remote monitoring with two-way communication with the generator. In one direction, the homeowner can check on the generator's status, change its settings, even start and stop it from anywhere in the world where he has Internet access.



In the other direction, Tower configured the generator to send email notifications to the homeowner when routine maintenance is required, or when a fault condition happens, or when a utility power outage occurs. This feature uses an Ethernet port on a router or modem with high-speed Internet access, and an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) battery backup, so the email messages can be sent during a power outage.



Thanks to these advanced control features, the homeowner not only can know what is going on with his generator whether he is home or not, he also can share that information with service technicians from Tower Generator via the web.

The outcome



The homeowner is very pleased with both his system and the whole installation experience.

"I selected Tower and Onan from a list of qualified and recommended providers and products based on my assumption that both would meet or exceed expectations. Tower kept me informed as to all aspects of installation progress. Chris and his team completed the project as planned and promised . . . a good call."

— The homeowner

As for Tower Generator, Chris Atiyeh emphasized, "We appreciate what Cummins does at the factory by not compromising the quality of the product, and we deliver this same level of excellence in every system we install. There are lots of systems out there we would not recommend, but we are always confident to install and service quality products like the RS20A."

"The feeling is mutual — we really appreciate the expertise the Tower team contributes," said Chad Boutet, marketing manager for Cummins Onan. "We rely on their knowledgeable assistance and feedback to help us understand what residential customers are looking for. This partnership is essential because, ultimately, a high-quality manufacturer-dealer relationship is key to high homeowner satisfaction."

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