

Federal lawmakers raising concerns about portable generator regulation change

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Federal lawmakers from Wisconsin are raising concerns about a potential regulatory change with implications for engine-driven portable welders.

In a recent letter to the head of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, GOP U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, Dem U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and GOP U.S. Sen. J.D. Vance of Ohio urged Chairman Alexander Hoehn-Saric to maintain an existing exemption for these products from the agency's safety standards for portable generators.

These portable welding machines are widely used by construction workers at industrial sites.

The letter comes after the commission released a Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that details potential new safety standards for portable generators, the lawmakers wrote.

Under the SNPR, the calculated weighted carbon monoxide emission rate of a generator couldn't exceed a specified limit, and the generator would need to include a carbon monoxide generator and shut off mechanism, the letter shows. A previous rule exempted generators that are part of a welding machine from the category of portable generators, while the most recent proposal doesn't include that exemption.

The lawmakers say the automatic shutoff requirement could "potentially render these machines unusable" due to the welding fumes and other emissions present at construction sites. They're urging the CPSC to maintain the current exemption for engine-driven portable generators, arguing the change would harm manufacturers, suppliers and the workers that use the machines.

"The SNPR's requirements do not account for these unique considerations and

threaten the integrity of products manufactured throughout Wisconsin and Ohio,” they wrote. “The failure to account for these distinct characteristics could result in the direct loss of jobs and the loss of product classes that are important in the welding and construction industries.”

See the letter:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/b0f4b0cf701/7746940e-fac5-4bef-a0d5-d6cf03249a4a.pdf>

See more in a release from Gallagher’s office:

<https://www.wisbusiness.com/2023/u-s-rep-gallagher-leads-push-against-onerous-regulations-on-northeast-wisconsin-welders-manufacturers/>