

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Natural Gas Supply System
Design Guide for Generac
Industrial Spark Ignited Generators

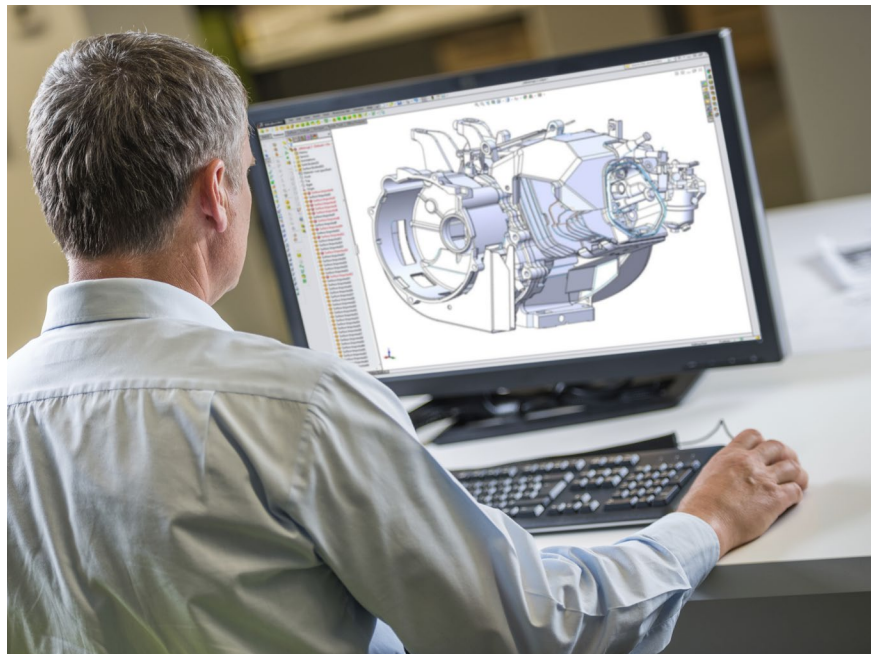
DESIGN GUIDE

Natural Gas Supply System Design Guide for Generac Industrial Spark Ignited Generators

INTRODUCTION

This design guidance document is to be provided to the consulting engineer during the project design phase and again at the time of submittal to the engineer and mechanical contractor for all Generac Industrial natural gas and propane fueled generator sets.

The following pages provide information and design best practices that have been demonstrated to minimize gas pressure instability and flow deficiency problems in the field. These design guidelines are to be used in combination with applicable national standards,¹ local fuel gas piping codes, and Generac's Installation Guidelines for Stationary Industrial Generators (Document #046622).



1. DESIGN OBJECTIVES

1.1. Provide the generator with a stable gas supply pressure over varying gas flow demand conditions. Maximum gas flow for all Generac generators are listed on the unit nameplate and generator data sheets.²

1.2. The pressure difference measured at the generator fuel pressure test port should typically be less than 2" water column (w.c.) from no-load running to full-load running condition.

1.3. The gas pressure must remain above the minimum specified for the generator set at all times, under all operating conditions. Failure to maintain adequate gas pressure and flow will result in operational problems such as extended crank cycles, inability to carry full load, and unstable engine speed.

1.4. Maintain a pressure and flow margin to allow for seasonal pressure variation on the upstream gas system. The emergency system must be before the facility shutoff.

1.5. Other facility loads must be factored in while sizing the Generator fuel system. It is recommended that the generator should have a dedicated fuel supply, which is not shared with any other appliances (furnace, water heaters, ranges, etc.) and the Generator fuel supply line shall be installed away from a high heat source so that the fuel temperature must remain at an acceptable operating range.

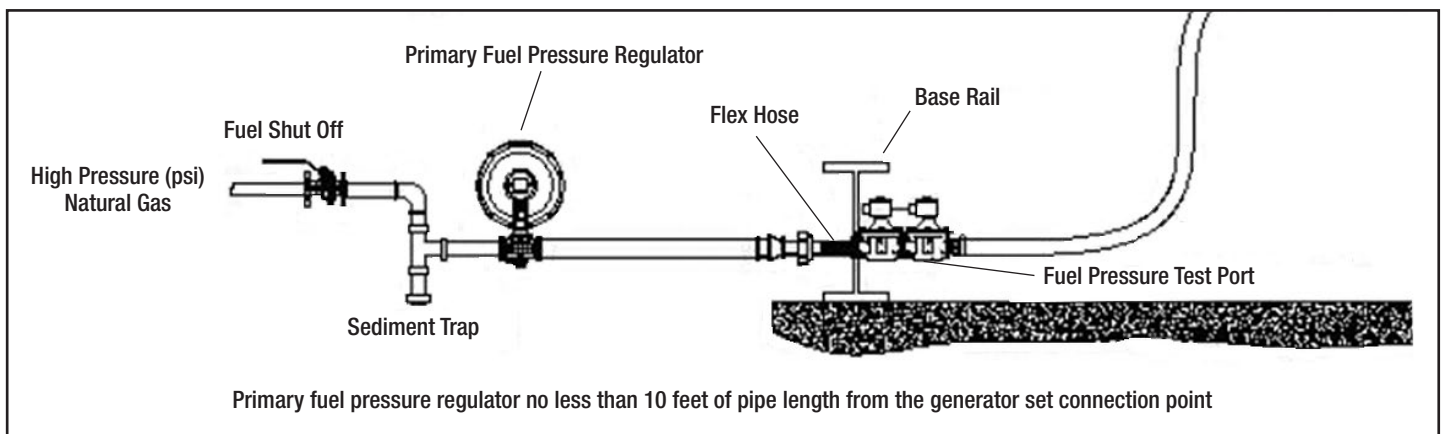


Figure 1: Typical natural gas supply regulator and piping configuration.

2. REGULATOR PERFORMANCE ATTRIBUTES³

2.1. Regulator Body Size: The inlet and outlet ports on a regulator are typically a single metal casting. The “body size” refers to the nominal diameter of the inlet and outlet pipe threads (or flange).

The regulator body size should never be larger than the pipe size, but it may be smaller provided the required flow can be obtained through the smaller regulator body size.

2.2. Pressure differential: The maximum flow rate of a service regulator is constrained by the gas pressure differential across the inlet and outlet port. When selecting a regulator for a specific gas flow requirement, it must correspond to the expected nominal upstream and downstream gas pressures. Consult manufacturers’ published flow rate tables at various inlet and outlet pressure values to select an appropriate regulator (*See the example in Table 1*).

2.3. Flow and droop: Select a direct acting regulator that will deliver approximately 1.5 times the maximum gas flow required by the generator with 1" – 2" water column (w.c.) pressure droop at the expected nominal upstream and downstream gas pressures. Direct acting regulators provide the quick

response required for controlling fast changing gas flow demands encountered in engine-generator applications.

For example, a Generac SG500 generator, configured for 7" – 11" w.c. nominal gas pressure, requires 6,000 CFH of gas at full load. The selected regulator must be rated to flow approximately 9,000 CFH (1.5 X 6000 CFH = 9000 CFH). Given an upstream gas pressure of 2 psi, a 1½" Model 122–12 regulator with a blue spring would be the first choice. However, assume there is a substantial risk of seasonal pressure variation where the upstream gas pressure may fall closer to 1 psi, a larger 2" Model 122–12 regulator with a blue spring will still provide the required flow at the lower upstream pressure.

INLET PRESSURE	Set Point 5" w.c.	Set Point 7" w.c.	Set Point 11" w.c.	Set Point 18" w.c.	Set Point 28" w.c.	Set Point 2 w.c.	REGULATOR SIZE AND MODEL	
	Red Spring 1" w.c. DROOP	Blue Spring 1" w.c. DROOP	Green Spring 2" w.c. DROOP	Orange Spring 2" w.c. DROOP	Orange Spring 3" w.c. DROOP	Black Spring 1/4" PSI DROOP		
8" w.c.	4000	3000	-	-	-	-	1 ½" Model 122-12	
14" w.c.	4900	4500	3700	-	-	-		
1 psi	6600	6500	6000	5750	-	-		
2 psi	10500	10000	9800	9000	9500	-		
3 psi	12000	12000	11100	10000	10500	8900		
5 psi	14500	14500	13900	12000	12700	10000		
10 psi	16000	16000	15000	13500	14000	12700		
15 psi	18000	18000	19000	19000	20000	18000		
8" w.c.	5000	4000	-	-	-	-		2 ½" Model 122-12
14" w.c.	8800	8000	6600	-	-	-		
1 psi	12200	12000	11500	10700	-	-		
2 psi	18200	18000	17300	16500	16900	-		
3 psi	25000	25000	24000	22300	23000	18000		
5 psi	32000	32000	30000	28100	29000	27400		
10 psi	38000	38000	35000	32200	33000	30000		
15 psi	38000	38000	40000	39000	40000	36000		

Table 1: Typical regulator flow capacity table. Note how the same model regulator will flow larger volumes of gas with a higher inlet pressure while maintaining a set downstream pressure. Courtesy of Sensus.

Gas pressure regulators are feedback control systems driven by the pressure differential across the diaphragm and the case spring. When gas flow on the low-pressure side of the regulator causes a pressure drop, spring force in the regulator case pushes on the diaphragm and opens the valve to increase gas flow to maintain the set pressure.

The dynamic pressure maintained by the regulator decreases slightly as gas flow rate increases (Figure 2). This phenomenon is known as pressure droop or, more simply, “droop”. Regulator manufacturers design products to minimize pressure droop while still maintaining regulator stability for a given gas flow rate.

Regulators tend to exhibit the best stability and response time when they operate near the middle of their proportional band. Selecting a regulator with a published maximum gas flow of approximately 1.5 times the full-load gas flow required by the generator avoids operation very close to the fully open or fully closed position, minimizing the probability of unstable operation. A regulator that is too large, capable of flowing several times the maximum gas flow required by the generator, will operate very close to its fully closed position which may also result in unstable operation.

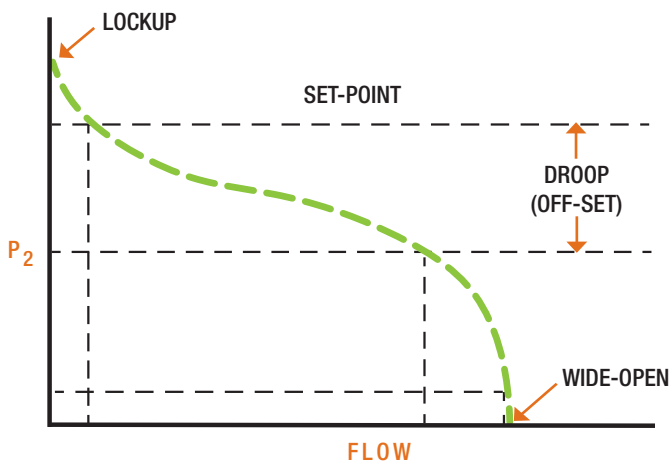


Figure 2: Pressure droop characteristic of a typical direct-operated regulator. Courtesy of Emerson-Fisher Natural Gas Application Guide.

2.4. Spring Rate, Accuracy, and Response Time:⁴

The regulator spring provides the force required to open the regulator valve and maintain the desired operating pressure. There may be more than one spring covering a desired operating pressure. Spring selection plays a role in regulator accuracy and response time.

In general, using the lightest spring rate (*a blue spring from the prior example referencing Figure 2*) that achieves the desired operating pressure will provide the best accuracy, minimizing pressure droop across the range of expected gas flow rates. However, a response that is “too fast” can introduce oscillation and instability. If instability is experienced during operation, moving to the next higher spring (*a green spring from the prior example referencing Table 1*) that includes the desired operating pressure is one potential method to mitigate oscillations.

2.5. Orifice size: For regulators where various orifice sizes are available, select the smallest orifice that will provide approximately 1.5 times the maximum gas flow required by the generator. Selecting an orifice that is significantly larger than necessary will result in the valve operating very close to the seat (nearly closed) and may result in pressure instability, increased seal wear, or audible noise from the regulator.

2.6. Lockup or hard shutoff: A regulator with a lockup or hard shutoff feature must be used. Lockup is the pressure above the regulator setpoint that is required to shut the regulator off tight so no gas flows. Typically, the lockup pressure is 1"-3" W.C. above the dynamic pressure setpoint measured when a small volume of gas is flowing (*i.e. no-load running condition on the generator*). The lockup feature prevents the low-pressure side of the regulator from

creeping up to the regulator line side pressure during long periods of zero gas flow when the generator is not running. If excessive gas pressure is allowed to build up on the low-pressure side of the regulator, the generator solenoid valves may be unable to open against the excessive pressure and the engine will not start.

2.7. Internal vs. external pressure registration:

Internally registered regulators are recommended because they generally have fewer operational problems in the field.

The diaphragm case of a regulator must have a connection to the low-pressure side in order to function. Internally registered regulators have a passage built into the body casting which provides a path for low-pressure gas to act against the diaphragm and spring force. Externally registered regulators lack this internal connection path but instead have an additional pipe fitting on the regulator case where a smaller diameter pipe is field-fabricated to a downstream location on the low-pressure side of the main gas piping system. Because all the pipe fabrication is done in the field, variation in the main gas piping system and the remote pressure registration line can cause unpredictable performance that is difficult to troubleshoot.

Externally registered regulators can be used, but the engineer and installation contractor must be aware of the dynamic effects introduced by variables such as; flow turbulence, length and diameter of the sensing line, location of the sensing point in the low pressure piping system, increases and decreases in pipe diameter.

If an externally registered regulator is used, locate the remote sensing point 8 to 10 pipe diameters downstream of the regulator in the largest diameter pipe section. The start of 8 to 10 pipe diameters is

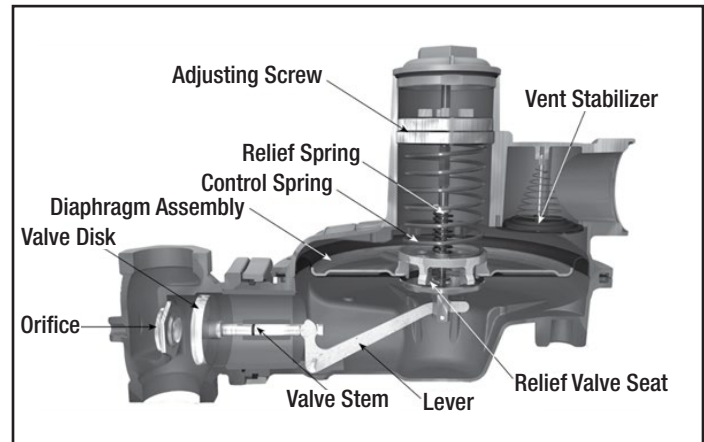


Figure 3: Major components of a direct-acting lever-type regulator, internally registered.
(Courtesy Emerson Fisher).

after the transition to the largest diameter pipe or any other throttling devices, component and/or fittings that will disrupt flow and create turbulence. The sensing line should be taken off the top of the main line to keep it free of debris and condensate. If possible, it should horizontally slope back to the main so that any condensate will drain back into the main rather than accumulate in the regulator's diaphragm case. Minimize the fittings used in running the sensing line. An externally registered regulator will respond to the pressure changes sensed at the remote tap rather than within the regulator body. It is advisable to install a pressure gauge at the sensing line tap on the main as this will be the control point of the regulator.

2.8. Recommended gas regulators:

The list of regulators below is not an exhaustive list of all suitable regulators that are available in the market, nor is it a list of "Generac Approved" regulators. The list is intended to help design engineers and mechanical contractors identify a range of products that have demonstrated their suitability for engine-generator service in past projects. Consult your Generac Distributor or gas regulator supplier for additional information.

- Sensus⁵
- Emerson Fisher
- Itron

3. FLOW CHARACTERISTICS OF GAS PIPING SYSTEMS:

3.1. Elbows and Tees: Minimize the number of elbows and tee fittings that increase pressure drop and flow turbulence in the system. Where more than three elbows and/or tees are required, use of swept radius elbows (typical for welded pipe sections) will help reduce pressure loss.

3.2. Reducing bushings (swages): Pipe reducing bushings are the transition from a larger to smaller pipe diameter or vice versa. Gas flow velocity is slower in a larger diameter pipe compared to a smaller diameter pipe moving the same volume of gas. If a remote sensing regulator is used, it is important to understand the dynamic pressure effects caused by the gas flow velocities in different sized pipe sections and design accordingly.⁶

In some installations where it is impractical to run approximately 10 feet of pipe, swaging up to a larger diameter pipe is a practical method to increase the gas volume between the service regulator and the generator fuel system. For installations where this method is used, an internally registered regulator is strongly recommended.

3.3. Flexible fuel lines: Flexible fuel lines are intended to isolate the rigid gas piping system from vibrations on the generator set and must be installed as straight as possible. They are not intended to correct misaligned pipe sections or to serve as an elbow.

3.4. Regulator vent lines: Regulator vents must open downward and be screened to prevent insects and water from entering the regulator case. Regulator vent lines should be kept as short as possible to reduce the possibility of affecting the regulator response time.

4. DESIGN REQUIREMENTS:

4.1. Use Generac's Power Design Pro⁷ gas pipe sizing module to determine the minimum recommended pipe size for the selected generator's gas flow given the anticipated length of the pipe run between the service regulator and the generator fuel inlet, including all elbows. Select the option to design for <0.5" water column pressure drop. Refer to the Table 1 for more detail.

4.2. The flexible fuel line shall be installed at the generator fuel inlet located on the frame rail and must exit the generator perpendicular to the frame rail. No pipe fittings (elbows or swages) are permitted between the flexible fuel line and the generator fuel inlet port.

4.3. The flexible fuel line must be as straight as possible. It is designed to isolate the rigid gas piping system from vibrations on the generator set. It is not intended to correct misaligned pipe sections or to serve as an elbow.

4.4. Given the combined effects of pipe friction loss and regulator droop, gas pressure should typically not drop more than 2" w.c. from no-load running to full-load running. Under no circumstances shall the gas pressure measured at the test port on the inside frame rail of the generator set drop below the minimum rated gas pressure listed on the generator nameplate.

4.5. Full-port ball valves, the same diameter as the pipe which they are connected to, are to be used for all shut-offs.

4.6. For multiple generator set installations (Generac MPS), each generator set must have its own regulator installed. Do not share a single large regulator across multiple generator sets.

Table 2: Natural Gas Fuel Pipe Sizing

KW	PIPE SIZE (inches)								
	1.00"	1.25"	1.5"	2"	2.5"	3"	4"	5"	6"
25	10	95	220	739					
30		60	147	565					
40		25	75	315	790				
50			50	220	560				
60			25	145	390	1185			
70			5	75	225	710			
80				65	195	630			
100				40	140	460			
130					50	215			
150					30	150			
200					15	95	475		
250						62	315	1020	
300						35	255	850	
350						10	145	535	
400							107	452	
500							42	245	650
625								120	395
750								112	380

TABLE VALUES ARE MAXIMUM PIPE RUN IN (feet)

NOTE: Pipe sizing is based on 0.5" H₂O pressure drop for Natural Gas. Also sizing includes nominal number of elbows and tees. Please verify adequate service and meter sizing.

5. RECOMMENDED DESIGN BEST PRACTICES:

5.1. Provide approximately 10 feet of pipe between the regulator and generator gas inlet. This does not have to be a single straight run. The pipe volume decouples the dynamic response of the generator throttle control system and the service regulator, reducing the probability of oscillation and unstable operation.

5.2. Avoid installing elbows or pipe swages immediately upstream or downstream of a regulator, unless specifically allowed by the regulator manufacturer. This will increase the turbulence of the gas flow, having a negative impact on pressure regulation accuracy and stability. Regulator

manufacturers typically recommend 10 pipe diameters of straight pipe run upstream and downstream of a regulator. For example, on a regulator with 2" diameter pipe fittings, 20" of straight pipe should be fitted upstream and downstream of the regulator. When field conditions prohibit meeting both constraints, place the elbow on the high-pressure side of the regulator. The straight run on the low-pressure side is more critical for proper regulator operation.

5.3. Avoid installing pipe swages immediately before or after an elbow. The combined flow turbulence of the swage and elbow in close proximity can cause unexpectedly large pressure drops at high flow rates.

5.4. Minimize the number of 90-degree elbows.

If more than three elbows are needed downstream of the regulator to accommodate the design, swept radius elbows are recommended to minimize pressure drop.

5.5. Use of an internally registered regulator is strongly recommended. Regulators with external pressure registration lines add an additional variable into the system that can be difficult to troubleshoot should the gas pressure become unstable under high-flow conditions.

5.6. For more stable gas flow with longer gas piping, the high pressure side may be raised as high as code allows and regulate it down to generator operating pressure at the generator. (This is the same design concept used in the electrical industry; “high voltage for long distances, transformation at the loads”). This may also help reduce cost as pipe diameters can be smaller, saving material and installation costs.

6. INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING RECOMMENDATIONS:

6.1. Refer to Generac’s Installation Guidelines for Stationary Industrial Generators (Document #046622) for additional installation details.

6.2. Pig all gas pipes after installation to remove pipe dope, weld slag and other contaminants that could damage the regulator valve seat and cause pressure creep.

6.3. Install a dirt trap and/or screen before the gas regulator.

6.4. Set the regulator pressure with the generator running at no-load. Measurements are taken at the generator fuel pressure test port on the inside of the frame rail. For units configured for 7"-11" w.c. operating pressure, set the regulator to 11" w.c. no-load running. For units configured for 11-14" w.c. operating pressure, set the regulator to 14" w.c.

no-load running. Pressure droop at full-load running will be a combination of regulator droop and pipe friction loss. Proper design will limit the no-load to full-load running pressure drop to no more than 2" w.c. and at no time can the gas pressure fall below the minimum pressure listed on the generator nameplate. Expect the lockup static pressure typically to be higher than the no-load running dynamic pressure.

7. METHODS FOR CORRECTING UNDESIRABLE PERFORMANCE:

7.1. Pressure surging and cycling: Should the regulator experience “hunting” or other unstable operating behavior, an extended vent line may be creating resonant condition on the atmospheric side of the regulator diaphragm. If this is suspected, temporarily disconnect the vent line or remove the cap from the regulator spring case and observe if the unstable behavior stops. Shortening the length or increasing the diameter of the vent line will often correct an instability caused by vent line resonance.

The pipe volume between the service regulator and the generator may be insufficient to decouple the control action of the regulator and the generator’s throttle control system. Increase the pipe volume between the regulator and the generator.

Change the response time of the regulator. In some cases, a small adjustment of the regulator spring (up or down 1 w.c.) will be enough to restore stability to the system. If available for the selected regulator, using the next higher spring is another inexpensive and easy to implement option. This will slow the regulator response and can reduce or eliminate the instability. Keep in mind that changing to a higher spring rate will also increase pressure droop and reduce the regulator’s maximum flow capacity which limits the applicability of this corrective measure.

7.2. Low gas pressure under high load: There are several potential causes of low gas pressure under high load.

Pipe runs with excessive friction loss caused by a pipe diameter that is too small for the required gas flow and pipe length and/or a large number of elbows. The only corrective action for this is to increase the pipe diameter between the regulator and the generator or to raise the pressure of the high pressure gas. Avoid this problem by using a gas pipe sizing tool during the design phase.

Insufficient regulator capacity. Confirm the upstream gas main and regulator flow capabilities for a given upstream gas pressure. If the upstream gas pressure is lower than originally anticipated, investigate the possibility adjusting the utility regulator (if present). If increasing upstream gas pressure is not possible, a larger orifice and/or different spring combination may be available for the existing regulator to increase flow and reduce pressure droop. If the previous steps fail to correct the situation, a larger regulator will be required. Avoid this problem by thoroughly reviewing the regulator manufacturer's flowrate tables prior to ordering.

7.3. Excessive transient pressure drop during generator crank cycle or block load application: If the transient pressure drop during a generator crank cycle or block load application is large enough to impact performance, speeding up the regulator response will reduce the transient pressure drop. Avoid this problem by using a direct-acting regulator that is suitable for engine-generator applications. If available for the selected regulator, using a lighter spring will increase the regulator response speed and reduce transient pressure dip. Finally, if a remotely registered regulator is used, increase the pipe diameter of the remote sensing line.

7.4. Pressure creep: Ensure the selected regulator has a lockup or hard-shutoff feature. Pressure creep is almost always caused by contaminants in the pipe system upstream of the regulator. The contaminants either get caught on the regulator valve disk or cause physical damage to the valve disk, making it impossible to achieve a hard shutoff. Avoid this problem by pigging all pipe components prior to installing the regulator and ensure a dirt trap is installed upstream of the regulator.

7.5. Failure to start, run smoothly, or accept 100% load: Barring a mechanical failure on the generator, failure to make 10-second start, run smoothly, or carry full load is almost always caused by an underlying gas supply problem.

8. PROPANE VAPOR AND LIQUID:

8.1. Propane vapor system: This type of system uses the vapors formed above the liquid fuel in the supply tank. The maximum tank liquid capacity is 80% and a minimum of approximately 20% of the tank capacity is required to boil off liquid into the vapor state. Gas pressure and volume requirements for an LPG system at the connection point of the generator are listed on the unit specification sheet. The piping system connecting the outlet of the first stage regulator to the connection point on the second stage regulator must be properly sized to provide the fuel volume required by the unit at 100% load.

The piping system between the outlet of the second stage regulator and the generator connection point must be sized to provide the fuel volume required by the generator at 100% load while also staying within the pressure range noted on the unit specification sheet.

8.2. Tank vaporization rate: In addition to sizing the gas piping system in a similar manner to natural gas, LP-vapor systems must also size the propane storage tanks to ensure a sufficient volume of gas will boil off

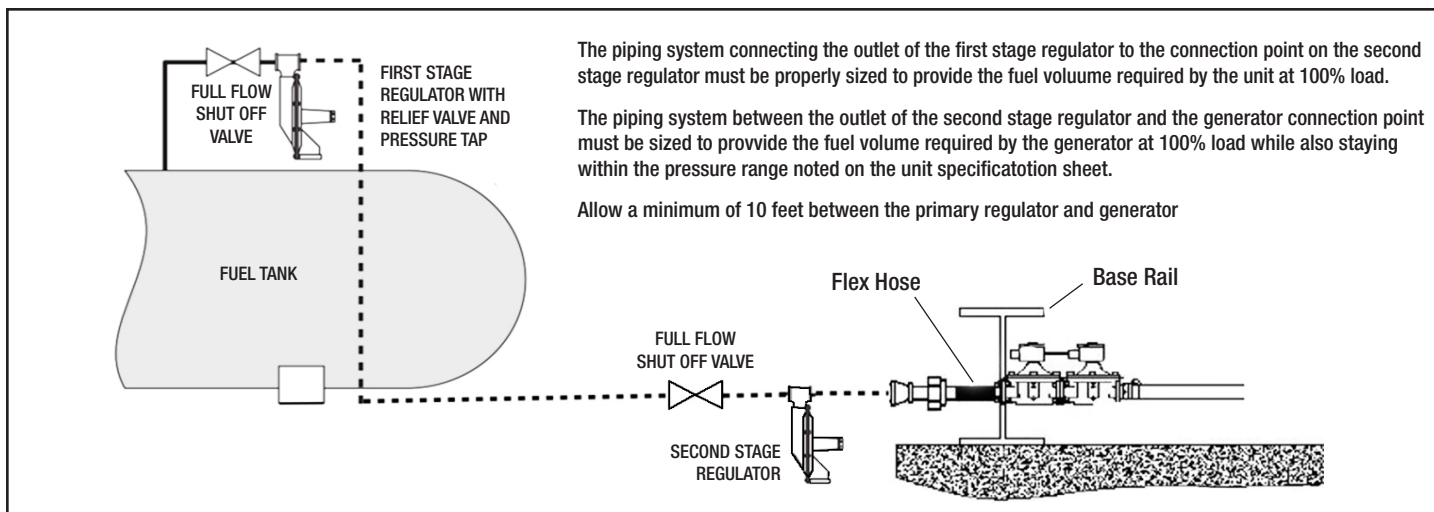


Figure 4: Typical LP vapor withdrawal system.

under a range of environmental conditions and various liquid levels in the tank. Liquid propane absorbs ambient heat from the surrounding environment to boil off liquid into a gas. Low liquid levels in a tank coupled with cold ambient temperatures can result in a condition where the tank boil off rate is insufficient to meet the demands of the generator.

The local propane supplier is often a good resource to help with tank sizing. The Emerson-Fisher LP-Gas Serviceman’s Handbook is another valuable resource for sizing propane systems and includes tank vaporization tables.⁸ In many cases, the tank volume must be larger (sometimes much larger) than the gas required to achieve a desired runtime. Where practical, buried tanks can improve the vaporization rate by protecting the tank from extremely low ambient air temperatures.

8.3. Liquid propane system: This system delivers propane in a liquid state (LPL) to the connection point on the generator set. Liquid propane systems are used where it is impractical to achieve the required boil off rate from the available fuel tank volume. For the engine to use the LPL fuel, the liquid must be vaporized prior to being delivered to the fuel mixer (carburetor). LPL will vaporize at a temperature of

Max. Intermittent Withdrawal Rate (BTU/HR) Without Tank Frosting* If Lowest Outdoor Temperature (Average for 24-Hours) Reaches . . .

TEMPERATURE	TANK SIZE (Gallons)			
	150	250	500	1,000
40°F	214,900	288,100	478,800	852,800
30°F	187,900	251,800	418,600	745,600
20°F	161,800	216,800	360,400	641,900
10°F	148,000	198,400	329,700	587,200
0°F	134,700	180,600	300,100	534,500
-10°F	132,400	177,400	294,800	525,400
-20°F	108,800	145,800	242,300	431,600
-30°F	107,100	143,500	238,600	425,000

* Tank frosting acts as an insulator, reducing the vaporization rate.

Table 3: Above ground AMSE Tank vaporization rate, LP-Gas Serviceman’s Handbook.

(-44°F/-42.2°C). The generator set LPL fuel system delivery pressure operates over the range of 58-180 psi (400-1242 kPa), depending on the ambient temperature and liquid level in the storage tank. LPL enters the vaporizer and passes into a “flash” chamber. The pressure drop in this chamber vaporizes the liquid to a gas and is regulated to negative 11"-14" w.c. (2.9-3.5 kPa). Heated engine coolant from the jacket water heater is used to heat the flash chamber of the vaporizer and to prevent the vaporizer from icing.

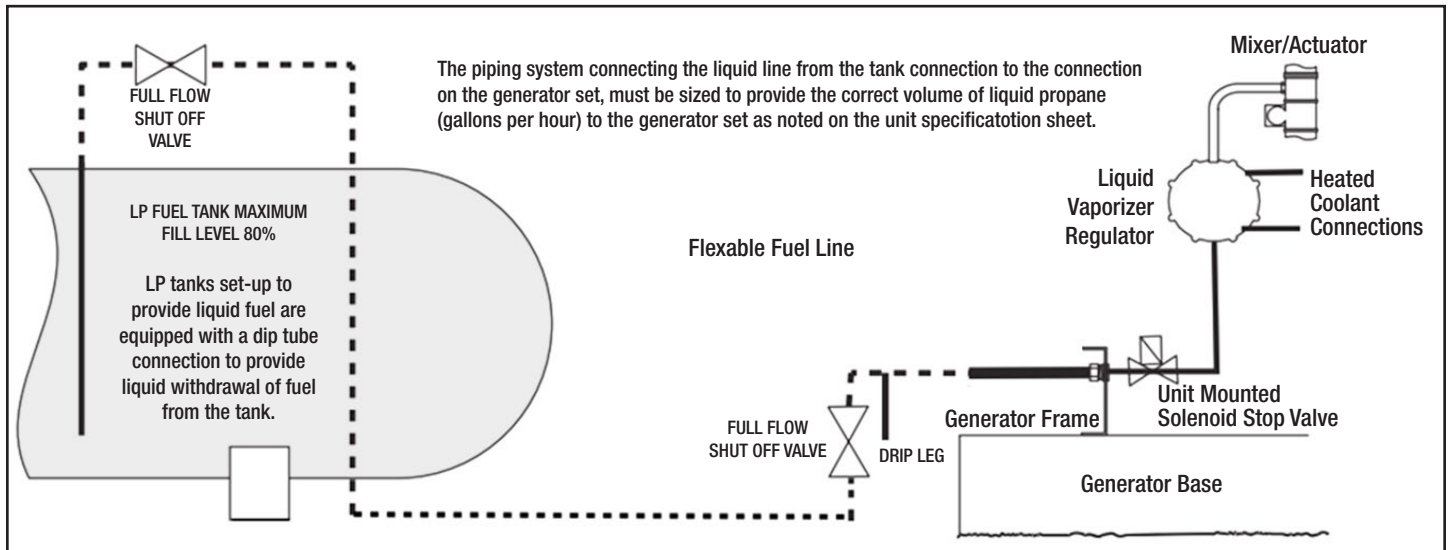


Figure 5: Typical LP liquid withdrawal system.

8.4. Dual fuel, natural gas primary and propane secondary: Some applications use a dual fuel system where the primary source may not be available during a power outage. Dual fuel systems use natural gas as

the primary fuel and LPG or LPL withdrawal as the secondary fuel. For dual fuel units, the specific fuel pressure, volume, and pipe sizing requirements for each fuel type must be observed.

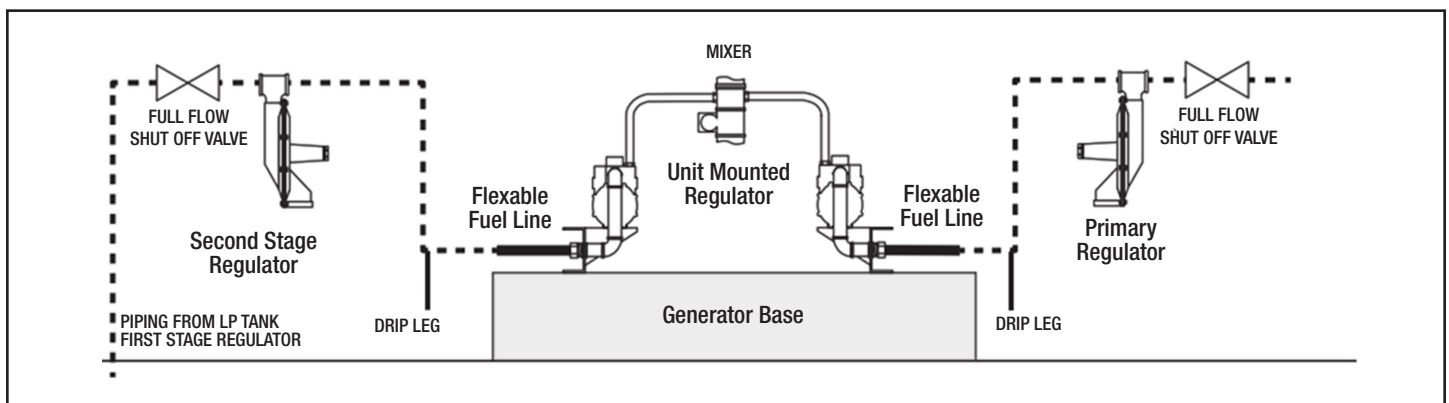


Figure 6: Typical dual-fuel system.

9. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

¹ NFPA 37 “Installation and use of Stationary Combustion Engines”

NFPA 54 “National Fuel Gas Code”

NFPA 58 “LP Gas Code”

Free access to view NFPA code documents can be found at:

<https://www.nfpa.org/Codes-and-Standards/All-Codes-and-Standards/Free-access>.

² Data sheets for Generac Industrial gas generator sets:

<https://www.generac.com/Industrial/products/gaseous-generators>.

³ A more thorough description of the operational principles and performance attributes of gas regulators can be found in Emerson-Fisher’s Natural Gas Application Guide at:

<http://www.emerson.com/en-us/automation/valves-actuators-regulators/regulators>.

⁴ Causes and Cures of Regulator Instability, Class #6010. William H Earney, Fisher Controls International Inc. 1995.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/197653841/Causes-and-Cures-of-Regulator-Instability>

⁵ Sensus product data sheets: <https://sensus.com/products/?utility=gas>

⁶ The Bernoulli Effect will cause a difference in gas pressure only when gas is flowing. When a remote sensing regulator is used, and the remote sensing point is located in a pipe section that is a larger diameter than the generator fuel inlet, under high-flow conditions it can result in an additional 1”-2” w.c. of pressure difference that cannot be eliminated. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernoulli%27s_principle

⁷ Power Design Pro is Generac’s web-based generator sizing tool that includes modules for gas supply pipe sizing and exhaust pipe sizing. It can be accessed and used free of charge at:

<https://pdp.powerdesignpro.com>.

⁸ LP-Gas Serviceman’s Handbook, Emerson Fisher.

<http://www.squibbtaylor.com/uploaded/lp10servicemaninst.pdf>.