

## RESIDENTIAL DEALER

### CASE STUDY of Newington Electric

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## GENERATORS SPARK A POWERFUL BUSINESS REVIVAL

During difficult economic times, even the most well-established business can find it challenging to maintain its revenue and profits. That was the dilemma facing Ed Ingalls, owner of Newington Electric, a respected Connecticut electrical services firm established in 1956 by his father, R.E. Ingalls. As the economic slowdown persisted, he cut back significantly and was concerned about the future of his company – but continued to look for new opportunities.

When Mother Nature landed a one-two punch on New England with Hurricane Irene in August of 2011 and a heavy, wet snowstorm at the end of October, half a million Connecticut residential and commercial customers were without electrical power for days or weeks. In the aftermath of the storms, many of them called Newington Electric for help, needing a new generator or service on a previously purchased model.

“We’ve been selling Generac products quite successfully for 20 years, but the volume of calls we received was incredible,” Ingalls says. “Not only was there a great demand for new generators, but we also got a lot of service requests from people owning units that had been improperly installed or poorly maintained. It was hectic for awhile, but we were well equipped to respond to the extraordinary demand and gained a lot of new customers. Those two weather events really helped revive our business.”

Recognizing the value of being the “go to” source for generator products and expertise, Ingalls expanded his commitment to backup power by establishing a new division, Connecticut Home Generator Systems. “The blackouts created an awareness of the value of owning a generator and ramped up the demand, so I decided to devote more resources to that part of our business. Our relationship with Generac made it easy and gave us a real competitive advantage.”

In the first nine months, sales took off. “Our air-cooled generator sales were close to \$500,000 – and that doesn’t include the larger liquid-cooled models we’ve also been selling,” Ingalls says. “The growth in our business has been huge.”

Connecticut Home Generator Systems is a full line dealer for residential and commercial standby products. “We specialize in backup power and know every aspect of it,” Ingalls says with pride. “We offer the full range of Generac portable and automatic home standby models. In addition to stocking portables, we maintain an inventory of 8 to 10 of the most popular residential units. The stocking program offered by Generac through G.E. Finance is very convenient and easy to manage.”

Newington Electric is well known for its commitment to customer service and the new division is no different. “We sell, install and service all the products,” Ingalls explains, “so

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we provide a turnkey solution and support after the sale. We offer 24-hour service and when someone calls, they get a live person instead of a recording. If they need emergency response, we provide it. Even if they just have general questions or concerns, there's someone available to speak with them 24 hours a day. I don't know of any other electrical company in Connecticut that does that."

Service after the sale is important and provides a valuable revenue stream, Ingalls notes. "Maintaining a relationship with our customers is very beneficial for everyone," he says. "We stress the importance of registering each newly installed unit with the manufacturer, which facilitates warranty work and helps Generac to improve its products. We offer convenient maintenance programs to ensure the reliability of the equipment and provide peace of mind to the customer."

Ingalls recognizes the value of a strong brand and well recognized name. "People know Newington Electric and trust us when it comes to electrical services, so we make sure they know that the generator division is part of our company. They recognize Generac as the #1 manufacturer of automatic home standby products, so it's an easy sell, especially when they see how many choices and price points they have compared to other brands."

That breadth of product is just one of the things Ingalls likes about offering the top selling line.

"Over the years Generac has continued to improve its units to make them more durable, dependable and affordable. Having a generator to protect a home or business has always been a great idea, but now it's within reach for more potential buyers, so the business proposition is as strong as ever."

Connecticut Home Generator Systems reaches customers through a variety of advertising media, including radio, television, newspapers and a dedicated web site (cthomegeneratorsystem.com). "We take advantage of Generac's cooperative advertising program in a variety of ways," Ingalls explains. "We also exhibit at home shows to display generators and get people thinking about standby power solutions. A recent Generac advertising campaign in Connecticut was extremely helpful in promoting sales and we hope they'll be doing that again in the future."

Having a trained and knowledgeable staff has been important to the success of the new division. "We have a great group of people serving our customers and we've invested in the training and resources to help them be successful," Ingalls says. "Our sales and technical team are trained to Generac's and our own high standards, so they have a valuable combination of product knowledge, technical expertise and experience. Backing them up is an office staff that fields customer inquiries, processes orders and keeps things running smoothly."

Newington Electric is on the rise again after feeling the pinch of uncertain economic conditions, which resulted in significant downsizing. Better times have brought an increase in business as well as an expansion of staff and facilities, while Ingalls has been proactive in pursuing opportunities. "We created a new division to install charging stations for electric cars, which has a very promising future," he says, "but it's the generator segment that has really taken off."

When asked what advice he might have for others who are considering this kind of business, Ingalls emphasized the keys to his own success. "First of all, get familiar with the product and create a knowledgeable staff with properly certified technicians. Develop good relationships with building inspectors and know all local, state and National Electrical Code requirements – that's a must. Have the capability and resources to sell, install and maintain the product. After the sale, offer periodic maintenance and have sufficient staff to take calls and respond promptly to service requests. Always make sure your customers know you're there for them."

# GENERAC®

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