Q: How often does my emergency generator need to be tested?

A: K-144 of the CMS Life Safety Code requirements states that generators must be inspected weekly and exercised under load for 30 minutes per month and shall be in accordance with NFPA 99. Provisions under this tag include:

- The weekly visual inspections must be conducted and documented per manufacturer’s recommendations (i.e. battery electrolyte levels, oil leaks, water leaks, belts).
- A monthly load test must be done for a minimum of 30 minutes under load (warm up time and cool off time cannot be included in the 30 minute test). The load test must under operating temperatures, or 30 percent of generator nameplate rating, or loading that maintains the minimum exhaust gas temperature as recommended by the manufacturer. There must be sufficient information/documentation that show that the load tests meet the requirements (i.e. run times, loads, start-up time).
- Exercise the transfer switches weekly and document this.
- A remote annunciator panel must be installed in a separate location from the generator with an audible trouble signal in a location where it can be heard 24 hours per day. Remote panel trouble indicators should at a minimum mirror the trouble indicators on the generator. If no trouble indicators on generator, remote panel should consist of a general audible and visual trouble alarm.
- If generator is located indoors, there must be a battery-powered emergency light in the generator room. If the generator is located outdoors, then there either needs to be a battery-powered emergency light at the generator location or it needs to be accessible for a car to provide illumination with its headlights (a flashlight at the generator location does not meet this requirement).

The most common deficiencies for K-144 are:

- Required tests not performed
- Lack of proper testing documentation
- Improperly located annunciator panel
- Emergency generator location is not equipped with battery-powered emergency light
- Missing or improperly located remote manual shutoff station
- Storage in generator room enclosure