



The

# Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

## The Worst I've Ever Seen! Is it a Generator Battery or an IED?

*[October 2019] Broadcasters depend upon generators to come on line and pick up the slack when the local utility power goes out. Careful maintenance is essential. Not only do you need to make sure a generator is ready when needed, but you need to avoid personal injury.*

Terry Baun shared this picture, from a generator at a TV station in Wisconsin. He noted that this picture was taken following a routine start-up of one of their generators.



Baun was happy to report that no one was injured when this battery failed. (You can see the top was blown off and is laying on the ground in pieces – the cells are exposed.)

It is, of course, a good reminder that working around batteries requires caution as well as personal protective equipment and clothing.

Generally a battery explosion results from ignition of the hydrogen/oxygen gasses created by the charging process. This is normally vented to the atmosphere, but some residual gas can remain in the battery.

Baun theorizes that something internal to the battery supplied a spark, possibly a cell that shorted when the battery was called upon to produce the starting current for the generator.

This was a sealed battery, so there was no way to check for low electrolyte level, which is another possible cause for a spark. As with many generator batteries, this one was on a constant trickle charge because it supplies power for the transfer switch.

In any case, Baun quickly replaced this lump of the now “ex-battery” with a non-sealed battery.



Do you have any interesting pictures that can serve as a warning to others? [Share them here, please!](#)

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*The Worst I've Ever Seen* is a periodic look at some of the curious things that happen in broadcasting.

*It is not our intention to embarrass anyone, but to realize that doing everything perfectly is not always possible. Nevertheless, after we chuckle a bit, it does remind us to check out our facilities.*

*Do you have a picture showing the “lighter side” of broadcasting? Please share it with us by sending it to: [Editor@theBDR.net](mailto:Editor@theBDR.net)*

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