



An Extended Guide · No. 1355

The Install and Permit Process for an Automatic Transfer Switch

Permits, inspections,
and doing it by the book

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! Read this first — this is licensed electrician's work

An automatic transfer switch is wired straight into your home's main electrical panel and works hand in hand with a standby generator. That makes installing one a licensed electrician's job from start to finish — almost always with a permit and an inspection — and never a do-it-yourself project. A big part of what the switch does is keep your generator's power from ever backfeeding onto the utility lines, which protects the crews working to bring your power back. Getting that right is exactly why the work belongs to a licensed pro. My job is to help you understand it, choose it, and live with it — not to open your panel. This guide is all about that permit-and-inspection part — what it is, why it matters, and how the process goes.

Doing it right, by the book

Installing an automatic transfer switch isn't just a matter of hiring someone to wire it up. There's a proper process — a permit, an inspection, sometimes a word to the utility — that exists to make sure the job is safe. This guide walks you through that process in plain English, so none of it feels mysterious or worrying.

I'm Bill, and I help folks in Portage County understand what they're getting into before the work starts. The permit-and-inspection part can sound like bureaucracy, but it's actually your protection — an independent check that the life-safety wiring was done right. Once you see why it's there, you'll want it, not resent it.

None of this is yours to handle — your licensed electrician manages the permit and inspection as part of the job. But understanding the steps helps you know what to expect, and helps you spot anyone trying to cut a corner they shouldn't.

★ I'll help you understand the process

If the idea of permits and inspections feels daunting, call or text me at (330) 200-8042. I'll walk you through what happens, step by step — and it's less than you fear.

The whole process, on one page

If you remember only these things, you understand how it goes.

- ❑ A licensed electrician assesses your home and quotes the job.
- ❑ They pull a permit from your local building department before the work.
- ❑ They install the switch and generator to code.
- ❑ An inspector — your authority having jurisdiction — checks the work and signs off.
- ❑ Gas or propane work may need its own permit and a licensed gas pro.
- ❑ Some areas require notifying the utility about a backup system.

✓ The paperwork is your protection

Every step of this process exists to confirm the job was done safely. It's not red tape for its own sake — it's the system that keeps a dangerous installation from ever passing as fine.

Why there's a process at all

It's fair to wonder why installing backup power involves permits when so many home projects don't.

The answer is the stakes. An automatic transfer switch ties into your main electrical panel and, done wrong, can defeat the very protection that keeps your generator's power off the utility lines — a danger to utility crews and your home alike. Because the safety stakes are so high, the electrical code and your local building department require the work be permitted and inspected.

So the process isn't there to slow you down or pad a bill. It's there because this is exactly the kind of work where an unseen mistake can be deadly — and an independent inspection is how those mistakes get caught.

✓ High stakes, sensible rules

The rules around backup power are strict precisely because getting it wrong is dangerous in ways you can't see. The process matches the seriousness of the work.

The permit — what it is and why

The permit is where the official process begins, and it's simpler than it sounds.

A permit is your local building department's permission to do the work, granted based on the plan your electrician submits. It puts the job on the record and sets up the inspection that will follow. Your electrician pulls it — it's part of a proper job — so it's not paperwork you chase yourself.

A permit also means the equipment and installation must meet code, including using listed transfer equipment approved for the job. That requirement is your assurance you're getting a safe, standard installation, not a improvised one.

! If someone offers to skip the permit...

An electrician who suggests skipping the permit 'to save time or money' is offering to skip the very check that confirms your safety. That's a reason to find a different electrician.

The inspector — your authority having jurisdiction

You'll hear the term 'AHJ' — authority having jurisdiction. It simply means the local official who inspects and approves the work.

Your AHJ is usually an inspector from your city, township, or county building department. Their job is to independently confirm the installation meets code — especially the backfeed protection that keeps your generator off the utility lines. The electrical code specifically requires backup equipment be approved by this authority.

Think of the inspector as a second, impartial set of eyes on the most safety-critical work in your home. They don't work for the electrician; they work to confirm the job is genuinely safe — which is exactly what you want.

✓ An impartial check, on your side

The inspector isn't there to make life hard. They're there to make sure the person who wired your life-safety system did it right. That's protection you'd want even if it weren't required.

What the inspection checks

The inspection is the heart of the process — the moment the work is confirmed safe.

The inspector reviews the installation against the code: that the switch and generator are properly and safely wired, that listed equipment was used, and above all that the isolation preventing backfeed is correctly in place. Depending on your area, there may be a rough inspection during the work and a final one when it's complete.

When the work passes, it's signed off — your assurance the installation is safe and up to code. If something needs correcting, the electrician fixes it and it's re-checked. That back-and-forth is the system working exactly as intended.

✓ A correction isn't a scandal

If an inspector flags something to fix, that's not a disaster — it's the process catching a detail so it can be made right before you ever rely on the system. Better now than during an outage.

The overall timeline

From first call to a working system, here's the shape of how it goes — though the exact pace varies by area.

- ❑ Assessment: the electrician visits, reviews your panel and needs, and quotes the job.
- ❑ Permit: they submit the plan and pull the permit from your building department.
- ❑ Install: the switch and generator are installed to code, with fuel connected as needed.
- ❑ Inspection: the AHJ checks and signs off, sometimes in two visits.
- ❑ Utility notification, where required, and final startup and testing.

✓ Timelines vary — ask locally

How long each step takes depends on your building department's schedule and how busy your electrician is. Ask your electrician for a realistic timeline in your area rather than assuming.

Gas and fuel permits, if they apply

If your standby generator runs on natural gas or propane, there's usually a fuel side to the process too.

Connecting a generator to a natural-gas line, or to a propane tank, is gas work — and it typically needs its own permit and a licensed gas professional, separate from the electrical work. The two trades coordinate, and both parts get inspected. It's one more reason a standby install is a job for licensed pros, not a weekend project.

Your electrician or installer usually coordinates the gas pro, so you're not juggling two contractors yourself. But it's good to know the fuel connection is its own permitted, inspected piece — because it's every bit as safety-critical as the wiring.

! Gas work is its own licensed trade

Never let anyone connect a generator to gas or propane who isn't the proper licensed professional. A gas leak is as dangerous as a wiring fault — both deserve a permit and an inspection.

Telling the utility, where required

Some areas ask that the utility be notified when a home adds backup power. Here's the plain version.

Because a backup system connects to your home's electrical service, some utilities or jurisdictions want to know it's there — a simple notification, not usually a hurdle. It helps them keep accurate records of what's connected in their area. Your electrician typically knows whether this applies where you live and handles it.

This is different from the special agreements needed for grid-tied solar that sells power back. A standby generator with a transfer switch is isolated from the grid — it never feeds the utility — so any notification is usually straightforward. Our guide on protecting the power lines explains that isolation.

✓ Your electrician knows the local rules

Whether the utility needs a heads-up varies by area. A good local electrician knows the rules where you live and takes care of it — one more reason to hire local and licensed.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The permit process is real everywhere, but the particulars — who your inspector is, how long things take — can differ between a town lot and a rural property.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, your building department and inspector are usually close at hand, and many homes have a natural-gas line, keeping the fuel side simple. The process tends to be well-trodden, with electricians who do these installs routinely.

- A nearby building department often means a more predictable permit and inspection schedule.
- A natural-gas connection, where available, keeps the fuel permitting straightforward.
- Electricians in town often do these installs routinely and know the local rules well.
- Closer neighbors make the utility notification and tidy placement worth attending to.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, your authority having jurisdiction may be a county or township office, and propane usually means a separate tank and its own permitting. Distances can stretch timelines a little, so it's worth asking your electrician what to expect locally.

- A county or township AHJ may have a different schedule than a city department — ask what to expect.
- Propane installs add a tank and its own permitted, inspected fuel work.
- Rural distances can affect how quickly inspections and deliveries happen — plan with some patience.
- A local electrician who knows your county's rules is worth seeking out.

★ Wondering how it works in your town?

Permit rules and inspectors vary from place to place around Portage County. Tell me where you are and I'll help you understand the local process. Call (330) 200-8042.

What you provide, and what the pro handles

Your part in the process is small and pleasant. The heavy lifting is the professional's.

What you provide

Your must-run list and goals, access to your home and panel, decisions on coverage and fuel, and your signature where needed. Mostly, you provide clarity about what you want and then let the pros work.

What the pro handles

The assessment, the plan, pulling the permit, the installation, coordinating any gas work, scheduling the inspection, any utility notification, and the final startup and testing. In short, the whole official process is theirs to run.

★ Your job is the easy part

You bring the wants and the access; the professionals bring the permits and the wiring. If you'd like help getting your part ready, that's exactly what I do. Call (330) 200-8042.

Why doing it by the book matters

It can be tempting, especially if money's tight, to wonder whether all this process is really necessary. It is.

An unpermitted, uninspected installation might look and work fine — while hiding a dangerous flaw in the very isolation that protects the utility lines. It can also cause trouble with home insurance or when you sell your home, since undocumented electrical work is a red flag to buyers and insurers. Doing it by the book protects your safety, your wallet, and your peace of mind.

So if anyone offers to do it cheaper by skipping the permit, understand what's actually being skipped: the confirmation that your life-safety wiring is correct. That's never a corner worth cutting.

! Unpermitted work can cost you later

Beyond the safety risk, undocumented electrical work can complicate insurance claims and home sales. The permit isn't just safety — it's protection for your investment, too.

What 'meeting code' actually means

You'll hear 'to code' a lot. Here's what it means in plain terms.

The electrical code is the shared rulebook for safe wiring, updated over the years as we learn more about what keeps people safe. 'Meeting code' means the installation follows those rules — proper equipment, proper wiring, and the required backfeed protection. It's the baseline for a safe, professional job.

Your local area adopts a version of the code, and your inspector checks against it. You don't need to know the code yourself — that's the electrician's and inspector's expertise. You just need to insist the work is done to it, which the permit and inspection ensure.

✓ Code is the floor, not the ceiling

Meeting code is the minimum for safety, and a good electrician often does better than the minimum. But nothing should ever fall below it — and the inspection is what guarantees that.

What permits cost

Folks worry the permit will add a lot. Here's the honest, general picture.

A permit has a fee, set by your local building department, and it's usually a modest part of the overall project cost. I won't quote a number — fees vary widely by area, and it wouldn't be honest to guess. Your electrician includes the permit in the quote, so you'll see it clearly rather than as a surprise.

Weigh that modest fee against what it buys: an inspected, documented, safe installation. Set beside the cost of the generator and the installation itself, the permit is small — and it's the part that confirms all the rest was done right.

✓ Ask for the permit line on your quote

When you get a quote, ask that the permit be listed as its own line. It keeps everything transparent, and confirms your electrician is planning to do the job properly.

After the inspection passes

Once the inspector signs off, a few nice things happen — and one you should keep.

Your system is officially approved, safe, and ready to protect your home. Your electrician usually does a final startup and walks you through operating it. And you'll have documentation of the permitted, inspected work — worth keeping with your home papers for insurance and for whenever you might sell.

That paperwork is quietly valuable. It's proof, to an insurer or a future buyer, that your backup power was installed properly and inspected — turning a potential question mark into a selling point.

✓ Keep the paperwork safe

Tuck your permit and inspection records in with your other home documents. A little folder now can save real hassle with insurance or a future sale.

Safety, briefly

The whole permit process is about safety; a couple of truths round it out.

! The generator still makes carbon monoxide

A standby generator burns fuel, so its exhaust still contains carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that is dangerous to breathe. Yours lives permanently outdoors, and your installer sets it the manufacturer's required distance from windows, doors, and vents so the exhaust drifts safely away from the house. You never have to place it yourself, but do keep that area clear, never box the unit in or enclose it to quiet it down, and keep tested carbon-monoxide alarms inside the house all the same.

And remember what the inspection most confirms: the isolation that keeps your generator's power off the utility lines. That's the life-safety heart of the whole process. Any future change or repair to the system should be permitted and done by a licensed electrician, too — not a do-it-yourself fix.

! Future changes get permits too

It's not just the first install — if you later expand or alter the system, that work should be permitted and inspected as well. Keep every change on the record and done by a pro.

Common mistakes to avoid

A few avoidable missteps come up around the process.

- **Hiring someone who skips the permit** to be cheaper — skipping the very check that confirms your safety.
- **Not budgeting for the permit**, then being surprised by a line-item that should have been expected.
- **Assuming the fuel side needs no permit** — gas and propane work usually do.
- **Losing the paperwork**, then struggling to prove the work was done right for insurance or a sale.
- **Rushing the timeline** and pressuring an electrician to skip steps — safety takes the time it takes.

! Cheaper-by-skipping is the trap

Almost every serious mistake here starts with someone offering to save money by skipping the official steps. That saving is never real — it's just risk you can't see.

Questions to ask about the process

These confirm your job will be done properly, on the record.

Q: Will you pull a permit for this work?

The answer should be a clear yes. Anyone who hesitates or suggests skipping it isn't the electrician for you.

Q: Who inspects it, and how many inspections are there?

Ask about your local AHJ and whether there's a rough and a final inspection, so you know what to expect.

Q: Does the fuel connection need its own permit and gas pro?

For a gas or propane generator, usually yes. Confirm how the fuel side is handled and inspected.

Q: Will I get documentation of the permit and inspection?

You want records to keep for insurance and any future sale. A good electrician provides them.

✓ There's no silly question

Asking about permits isn't second-guessing your electrician — it's confirming they plan to do the job right. A good one welcomes it.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about permits and the process, answered plainly.

Q: Do I really need a permit for a transfer switch?

Yes — in nearly every area, this is panel work that requires a permit and inspection. The inspection confirms the backfeed protection that keeps your generator off the utility lines was done right.

Q: Who pulls the permit — me or the electrician?

Your licensed electrician pulls it as part of the job. You don't chase paperwork yourself; you just make sure they're doing it.

Q: What does the inspector check?

That the installation meets code — proper equipment and wiring, and especially the isolation that prevents backfeed. When it passes, the work is signed off as safe.

Q: Is there a separate permit for the gas connection?

Usually, yes — connecting a generator to natural gas or propane is gas work needing its own permit and a licensed gas pro, coordinated with the electrical work.

Q: Can't I save money by skipping the permit?

No — you'd be skipping the check that confirms your safety, and risking trouble with insurance and any future home sale. The permit is modest and worth every penny.

★ Process feel daunting?

It's less than you fear, and your electrician handles most of it. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll walk you through exactly what to expect.

What I do to help

The permit process is the electrician's to run — but I can make it far less mysterious for you.

- **What I help with:** explaining the process plainly, helping you get your part ready, and lining up a licensed electrician who does it properly and pulls permits as a matter of course.
- **What only a licensed electrician does:** pull the permit, do the installation, and coordinate the inspection.
- **What I never do:** the wiring or permitting myself — I help you understand it and find the right pro.

★ I'll demystify the whole thing

If the process feels overwhelming, that's exactly what I'm here to ease. Call me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll go through it together.

The process in a nutshell

Here's the whole thing, start to finish, in a few plain sentences.

A licensed electrician assesses your home, pulls a permit, installs the switch and generator to code (with a licensed gas pro for any fuel work), and schedules an inspection. Your local inspector confirms the work is safe — especially the backfeed protection — and signs off. Any utility notification is handled, and your system is started and tested.

Your part is small: share your goals, give access, make a few decisions, and keep the paperwork afterward. The process exists to confirm your life-safety wiring is right — which is exactly the kind of thing you want confirmed.

✓ Trust the process — it's on your side

Every step is there to make sure your backup power is genuinely safe. Far from a hassle to endure, it's the assurance that the most important part was done right.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made the install and permit process feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

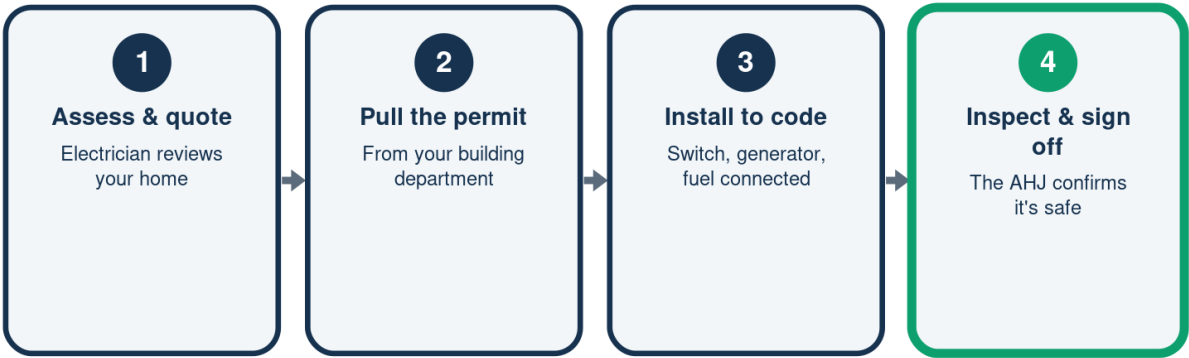
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't do the licensed electrical or gas work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

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The Install and Permit Process

From first call to a working system



Your electrician runs the whole official process for you.

Who Handles What

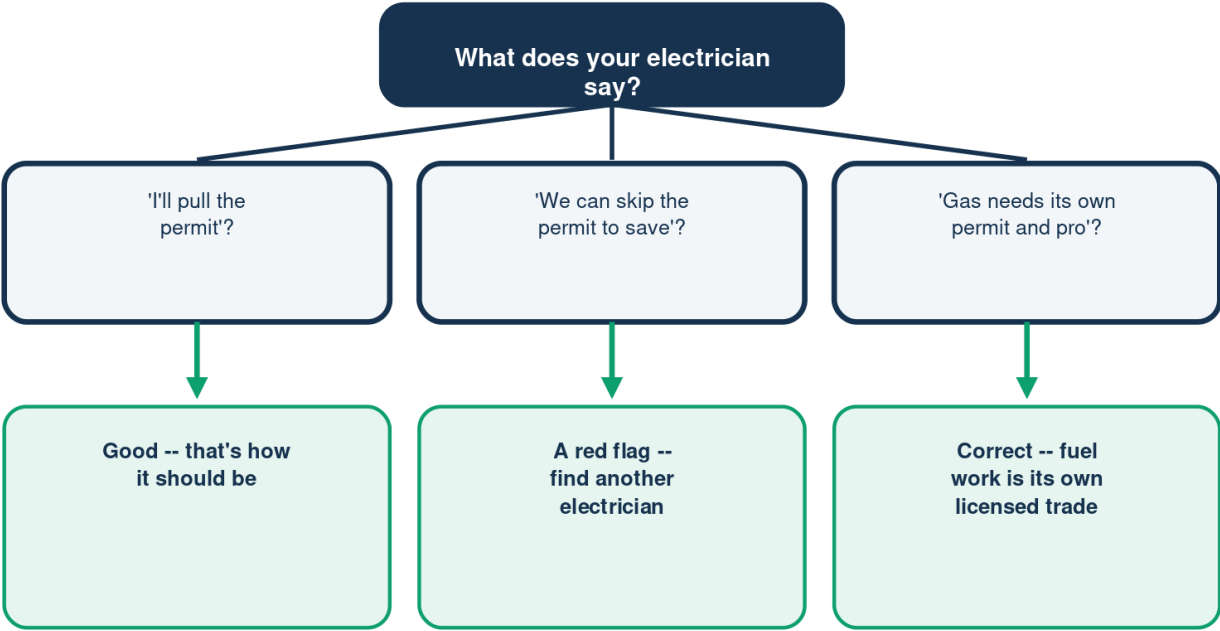
Your part is small; the pro's is large

	You	The professionals
Provide	Goals & access	The plan & permit
Decide	Coverage & fuel	Code compliance
The work	Sign where needed	Install & connect
The check	Keep the records	Schedule inspection

You bring the wants; the pros bring the permits and wiring.

Is Your Job Being Done by the Book?

A quick check on your electrician



Skipping the permit skips the check that confirms your safety.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

Why the Paperwork Matters

The permit protects more than you'd think

	It confirms	It protects
Safe wiring	Backfeed protection	Utility crews & you
Code compliance	A proper install	Your home & family
A record	Documented work	Insurance & resale
Sign-off	An impartial check	Your peace of mind

Keep your permit and inspection records with your home papers.



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You just have to remember you can call.
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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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