



An Extended Guide · No. 1855

Cameras & Employees — Notices, Break Rooms & Off-Limits Areas

Doing right by your staff — where
cameras belong and where they never do

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! Read this first — it's about people, not just pictures

Before the gear, a word that matters more than any camera: with a business you are recording other people — customers, staff, people walking by — so where you point a camera, and whether it picks up sound, is as important as the picture. As a rule, keep cameras on general work and public areas, never on restrooms, changing areas, or anywhere someone expects privacy, and be very careful about recording audio. This guide gives you plain-English general information, not legal advice. For your own situation — especially anything to do with employees, audio, or the law — check with an attorney who knows Ohio. This guide is about doing right by the people who work for you — where cameras belong, where they never do, and how to be open about it.

Cameras and your people — getting it fair and right

Watching over your business shouldn't mean watching over your staff in ways that feel like snooping. The good news is that the fair way and the legal way are almost always the same way, and this guide walks you through both — where cameras belong, the places they must never go, and how to be open with your team about it.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30+ years of helping folks with their technology, I've seen how a camera setup can either reassure a staff or quietly sour a workplace — and the difference usually comes down to a few simple choices made up front.

I'm not a lawyer, and this isn't legal advice. But I can give you the plain-English version: a couple of hard lines you must never cross, a few gray areas to steer around, and the small steps — a notice, a short written policy — that keep everything above-board and everyone comfortable.

★ Treat staff the way you'd want to be treated

The whole guide really comes down to that. Cameras aimed at the store and the money, out in the open, with a clear policy, read as sensible security. Cameras that feel hidden or aimed at people feel like distrust. If you want help landing on the right side of that line, call me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these points, your cameras will be both fair to your staff and on the right side of Ohio law.

- ❑ NEVER put cameras in restrooms, locker rooms, or changing areas — secretly recording there can be a crime under ORC 2907.08.
- ❑ Break rooms and private offices are a gray area — avoid them or get advice.
- ❑ Ohio has no statute requiring you to post notice of video surveillance, but posting a clear notice is smart and fair.
- ❑ Write a short camera policy: where cameras are, that it's video-only, who can view footage, and how long it's kept.
- ❑ Leave microphones off — audio at work is governed by Ohio's one-party-consent rule; see the Ohio audio guide.
- ❑ If your workplace is unionized, adding surveillance may be a bargaining matter — talk to an attorney.

✓ The one line to hold onto

Point cameras at places and things — doors, the register, the floor — not at people in private moments. Be open about it, and you'll almost never go wrong.

Cameras at work are normal — fairness is the goal

Let's start from the right place: there's nothing wrong with having cameras where your people work. The question is how, not whether.

Businesses watch their premises for good reasons — theft, safety, disputes, liability — and your employees generally understand that. Staff don't resent a camera over the register or the loading dock. What erodes trust is the sense that cameras are hidden, aimed at them personally, or placed where people expect a little privacy.

So the aim of this whole guide isn't to scare you off cameras near staff. It's to help you set them up in a way that protects the business and respects the people in it — which, happily, is also the way that keeps you clear of the law. Fair and legal pull in the same direction here.

✓ Openness is your best friend

The single biggest thing you can do for staff trust costs nothing: be open. Cameras everyone knows about, with a plain explanation of why they're there, feel like security. The same cameras, discovered by surprise, feel like surveillance. Same equipment, very different workplace.

The places cameras must NEVER go

Everything else in this guide is judgment and good practice. This page is the one hard line — the rule with no exceptions.

Cameras must NEVER go in restrooms, locker rooms, changing areas, or any similar private space. Ohio's voyeurism law, ORC 2907.08, makes it a crime to secretly or surreptitiously record a person in a place where they have a reasonable expectation of privacy — especially to view private areas or under clothing. These are classed as misdemeanors, and they are exactly the kind of charge no business ever wants attached to its name.

There's no security benefit that justifies a camera in those spaces, and no version of 'but it was for a good reason' that makes it acceptable. The line is simple: if it's a place people undress or expect bodily privacy, no camera goes there, full stop.

! The law behind this line

Ohio's ORC 2907.08 makes secretly recording someone in a place where they reasonably expect privacy — restrooms, locker and changing rooms and the like — a crime. Keep cameras out of those spaces entirely, with no exceptions. This is general information, not legal advice; rules change and every situation is different, so confirm the specifics with an attorney who knows Ohio before you rely on it.

Why those spaces are off-limits

It helps to understand the idea behind the rule, because it also guides the gray-area calls on the next page.

The principle is 'reasonable expectation of privacy.' There are places where any person reasonably assumes they're unobserved — a bathroom stall, a changing room, a space where people undress. Recording someone there violates something basic, and the law treats it far more seriously than a camera on a sales floor.

That same principle is your compass everywhere else. The stronger a person's reasonable expectation of privacy in a spot, the more caution a camera there demands. On an open sales floor, that expectation is low. In a restroom, it's absolute. Most of the judgment calls in this guide are really just asking: how private would a reasonable person expect this spot to be?

! When in doubt, picture a reasonable person there

Before you aim a camera at any spot near staff, ask: would a reasonable person standing here expect some privacy? The higher the answer, the harder you should think — and in the clearest private spaces, the answer is simply no camera.

The gray areas: break rooms and offices

Between the open sales floor and the clearly-private restroom sit a few spots that call for judgment. Here's how to think about them.

Break rooms and private offices are a gray area. People relax in a break room — eat, make a personal call, let their guard down — so they carry a fair expectation of some privacy, even though it's not a restroom. A camera there won't necessarily break the law, but it risks a privacy complaint and it can really bruise staff morale. The safe course is to avoid these spaces, or get advice before placing a camera in one.

If you think you have a genuine reason — say, repeated theft from a break-room fridge or petty cash in an office — don't just quietly aim a camera. That's the moment to talk to an attorney about doing it the right way, and to be especially open with staff about what's there and why.

✓ Gray areas are where you slow down

The restroom rule is easy because it's absolute. The break room is harder precisely because it's allowed-but-risky. Treat 'allowed but risky' as a signal to pause, prefer leaving it alone, and get advice if you really think you need it.

Posting a notice — not required, but smart

People often ask whether the law makes them post a sign. In Ohio, the answer is no — but posting one anyway is one of the best small moves you can make.

Ohio has no specific statute REQUIRING an employer to post notice of video surveillance. So strictly speaking, you could run cameras in your general work areas without a sign. But 'not required' and 'not a good idea' are different things, and here they point in opposite directions.

Posting a clear notice is best practice for three reasons: it sets expectations, so no one feels ambushed; it strengthens deterrence, because would-be trouble sees the cameras are real; and it supports fairness, showing staff and customers alike that you're being open rather than sneaky. A plain sign at the entrance and in monitored areas does the job.

✓ A sign is cheap insurance for trust

A simple 'These premises are monitored by video surveillance' notice costs almost nothing and heads off the single most common complaint — 'I didn't know I was being recorded.' There's rarely a good reason not to post one.

A short written camera policy

A notice tells people cameras exist. A short written policy tells your staff how the whole thing works — and it's one of the wisest pages you can put in your handbook.

It doesn't need to be long or lawyerly. A clear paragraph or two, shared openly with staff, settles most questions before they're asked and shows you've thought this through. A good short policy covers four things.

- **Where the cameras are** — the general areas they cover, so there are no surprises.
- **That it's video-only** — no audio — which reassures staff and keeps you clear of Ohio's audio rule.
- **Who can view the footage** — naming who has access keeps it from feeling like anyone's spying.
- **How long footage is kept** — a plain retention period shows the system is for security, not for watching people indefinitely.

★ I'll help you draft the plain-English version

You don't need a law firm to write a sensible camera policy, and I'm glad to help you put the four points above into clear words that fit your business. For the fine legal wording, I'll point you to an attorney. Call (330) 200-8042.

Two kinds of businesses, two sets of needs

How you handle cameras-and-staff shifts a bit with the kind of place you run, but the hard lines and the fairness goal stay the same for both.

If you run a customer-facing shop or storefront

Your staff work out front among customers, often by a register, and the main privacy pinch points are the break room and any back changing or locker space for uniforms.

- Cover the floor, register, and entrances — the places staff expect it.
- Keep cameras out of any area where staff change into uniforms.
- Avoid the break room; if theft is a real issue, get advice first.
- Post a visible notice and keep audio off at the counter.

If you run an office, warehouse, or back-of-house

Fewer customers, but more private offices, locker rooms, and break areas — and staff who spend long shifts in spaces where they expect to relax a little away from a lens.

- Cover doors, loading areas, and high-value stock, not desks and lounges.
- Keep cameras firmly out of locker rooms and changing areas.
- Treat private offices and break rooms as gray areas to avoid.
- Share a short written policy so long-shift staff know the rules.

★ Not sure where your lines are?

Every building has its own mix of public floor, private offices, and in-between spaces, and the gray areas are exactly where a second opinion helps. Walk me through your layout and I'll help you place cameras where they're fair and legal. Call (330) 200-8042.

Leave the microphones off

Video is most of this guide, but audio deserves its own clear word, because it's where good intentions most often go sideways.

Audio at work is governed by Ohio's one-party-consent rule, ORC 2933.52. Your employees talk among themselves all day, and those are conversations you're generally not part of — so recording them raises a serious interception problem, on top of making staff feel listened-in-on. The simple, safe course is to leave microphones OFF.

A video-only system sidesteps the whole audio question and, as a bonus, gives you one of the most reassuring lines you can put in your policy: 'our cameras record video only, with no sound.' We give the audio rules their own full treatment in the Ohio audio guide — worth a read if you're ever tempted to turn a microphone on.

! Audio is a legal issue, not just a setting

Many cameras ship with the microphone on by default, so leaving it off is an active step, not something that happens automatically. Check every camera — and see the Ohio audio guide before you ever record sound where people work.

A note for unionized workplaces

If your staff are represented by a union, there's an extra layer worth knowing about before you add or change cameras.

For a unionized workplace, adding surveillance can be what's called a mandatory subject of bargaining under federal labor law. In plain terms, that can mean you're expected to negotiate the change with the union rather than simply install cameras and announce it. I'm mentioning this lightly, because it's a real consideration — but the details are squarely a question for a professional.

If that's your situation, loop in an attorney who handles labor matters before you make changes. It's far easier to get the process right up front than to unwind a dispute after the cameras are already on the wall.

! If you have a union, get advice first

Adding or changing workplace surveillance where staff are unionized can trigger a duty to bargain under federal labor law. This is general information only — talk to an attorney who knows labor law before you proceed. This is general information, not legal advice; rules change and every situation is different, so confirm the specifics with an attorney who knows Ohio before you rely on it.

Where cameras DO belong

After all the 'nevers' and gray areas, let's be positive about the many places a camera is both useful and perfectly fair.

The reassuring truth is that the spots that matter most for security are also the spots with the lowest privacy concerns — the places staff fully expect to be covered. You lose nothing by respecting privacy; the valuable cameras live exactly where privacy worries are smallest.

- Every outside door — front, back, side, loading — where people enter and leave.
- The register, counter, or wherever money changes hands.
- The general sales floor or work area, for an overall picture of the day.
- Stockrooms, high-value shelves, and the loading dock.
- The parking lot and approach, where arrivals and incidents start.

✓ Point at places and things, not people

Notice that every spot here is a place or a thing — a door, a till, an aisle — not a person in a private moment. That framing is the heart of fair, legal camera placement. Cover the business; leave people their privacy.

Who can view the footage, and for how long

Fairness isn't only about where cameras point. It's also about who gets to watch the video and how long it hangs around.

Footage is sensitive. The fewer people who can see it, the less chance it's misused — a manager peeking at a disliked employee, or video wandering off onto someone's phone. Decide deliberately who has access, keep that circle small, and write it into your policy so everyone knows the rules are the same for all.

Retention matters too. Keeping footage a sensible number of days — enough to catch and review an incident — shows the system is for security, not for building a permanent file on your staff. Pick a period that fits your real needs and let old video roll off on its own.

! Loose access is its own kind of harm

A camera system that respects privacy on the wall but lets anyone pull up and share footage has just moved the problem. Lock down who can view and export video as carefully as you chose where the cameras point.

Handling staff questions and concerns

Even with everything done right, an employee may have questions about the cameras. How you respond sets the tone for the whole workplace.

Welcome the question rather than getting defensive. If you've placed cameras fairly and have a clear policy, you've got nothing to hide — so explain plainly what the cameras cover, why they're there, that there's no audio, and who can see the footage. Most concerns melt away once someone understands the system isn't aimed at them personally.

If a worker raises a genuine privacy worry about a specific spot — a camera that feels like it watches their desk, say — take it seriously and look at it with fresh eyes. Often there's an easy adjustment that keeps the security you need while easing the concern. That responsiveness builds more trust than the perfect policy ever could.

★ A fair setup answers most questions for you

When your cameras are open, video-only, and pointed at places rather than people, the hard conversations mostly don't happen. If you'd like help setting things up so they're easy to explain and defend, that's right up my alley. Call (330) 200-8042.

A simple fairness checklist

Walk your workplace with this list and you'll have a camera setup that's both legal and fair to the people in it.

- ☐ No camera points at a restroom, locker room, or changing area — ever.
- ☐ I've avoided break rooms and private offices, or gotten advice first.
- ☐ A clear video-surveillance notice is posted at entrances and work areas.
- ☐ I've written a short policy: where, video-only, who views, how long kept.
- ☐ Every camera's microphone is off, and I've confirmed it.
- ☐ I've limited who can view and export footage, and set a retention period.
- ☐ If we're unionized, I've checked with an attorney before adding cameras.

✓ Print this and walk the floor

Take this checklist on a slow walk through your workplace, pausing at each camera. If every box checks out, you've done right by both your business and your staff — which is the whole point.

Common mistakes employers make

Most camera-and-staff trouble comes from a short list of avoidable missteps. Now you'll spot them before they happen.

- **A camera in a restroom or changing area** — the one unforgivable mistake, and a possible crime.
- **Hidden cameras aimed at staff**, discovered by surprise, which destroys trust even where they're legal.
- **Leaving the microphones on**, turning a video system into an audio problem under Ohio law.
- **No notice and no policy**, so the first an employee hears of it is a rumor.
- **Letting anyone view or share footage**, so a fair setup leaks out the back door.
- **Adding cameras in a union shop** without checking the duty to bargain first.

! The worst mistake is also the easiest to avoid

A camera where people undress is both the gravest error here and the simplest to never make. Hold that one hard line, be open about the rest, and you've avoided nearly all the real trouble.

How this fits your whole system

Cameras and employees isn't a separate project — it's one lens on the bigger job of planning a sensible system.

Everything here pairs naturally with our planning guide, where you walk the building, list what you need to see, and place cameras around real needs. If you plan privacy in from the first spot — keeping cameras on doors, tills, and floors and off private areas — you get the fairness in this guide almost for free, rather than bolting it on after a complaint.

And it pairs with the Ohio audio guide, which goes deep on why those microphones stay off. Read the three together and you've got the whole picture: a system that protects the business, respects the staff, and stays well clear of the law.

✓ Plan privacy in from the first camera

The cheapest fairness is the kind you design in at the start. When you're deciding where a camera goes, ask the privacy question right alongside the security one — it's far easier than moving a camera after someone objects.

When to bring in an attorney

Most of this you can handle yourself with good sense and a clear policy. A few situations really do call for professional advice.

Call an attorney before placing a camera in any gray-area space like a break room or private office; before adding or changing surveillance in a unionized workplace; if an employee raises a formal privacy complaint; or if you're writing camera language into an employee handbook and want it right. These are fact-specific questions where a guide can't substitute for advice.

! The honest limits of this guide

I've laid out the hard lines and the good practices as plainly as I can, but I'm a tech helper, not a lawyer, and workplace rules turn on the details of your situation. Before you rely on any of this — especially around gray areas, unions, or a handbook — confirm it with an attorney who knows Ohio. This is general information, not legal advice; rules change and every situation is different, so confirm the specifics with an attorney who knows Ohio before you rely on it.

Common Questions

The questions employers ask me most about cameras and staff.

Q: Can I legally put a camera in the employee break room?

It's a gray area, not an automatic no — people expect some privacy there, so a camera risks a complaint and bruises morale. The safe course is to avoid it, or get an attorney's advice first. General information, not legal advice.

Q: Do I have to tell employees there are cameras?

Ohio has no specific statute requiring you to post notice of video surveillance, but posting a clear notice is best practice — it sets expectations, strengthens deterrence, and supports fairness. Being open is almost always the right move.

Q: Can cameras ever go in a restroom or changing area?

No — never. Secretly recording someone where they reasonably expect privacy can be a crime under Ohio's ORC 2907.08. There's no security reason that justifies it.

Q: Should my cameras record audio of employees?

The safe answer is no — leave microphones off. Audio at work is governed by Ohio's one-party-consent rule (ORC 2933.52), and recording staff conversations you're not part of raises real problems. See the Ohio audio guide.

★ Still weighing a tricky spot?

The gray areas are exactly where a quick conversation saves a lot of second-guessing. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll talk through your layout — and I'll tell you honestly when it's time for a lawyer.

The bottom line

If you take one thing from this whole guide, make it this.

Cameras near your staff are fine and normal — as long as you hold one hard line and follow a few fair practices. Never put a camera in a restroom, locker room, or changing area; Ohio's ORC 2907.08 can make that a crime. Treat break rooms and private offices as gray areas to avoid. And though no Ohio statute requires it, post a clear notice anyway.

Then round it out: write a short policy — where cameras are, that it's video-only, who can view footage, how long it's kept — keep the microphones off, limit who sees the video, and check with an attorney if you're unionized or weighing a gray-area camera. Do that, and you've protected the business and respected your people in one stroke.

✓ Fair and legal are the same path here

That's the gift of this topic: the choices that keep you clear of the law are the very same ones that keep your staff comfortable. Aim at places, be open, keep sound off, and you're on the right path.

A final, reassuring word

Don't let the 'nevers' and 'gray areas' leave you anxious about cameras near your team. The path is clearer than it sounds.

Almost everything here flows from one friendly instinct: treat your staff the way you'd want to be treated. Point cameras at the business, not at people in private moments; be open about what's there; keep the sound off; and be ready to listen if someone has a concern. Do that and both the law and your workplace take care of themselves.

A good camera setup can actually make staff feel safer — watched over in the good sense, not watched. That's the version worth aiming for, and it's well within reach for any small business willing to think it through up front. You've just done that thinking.

★ You've done right by your people

Reading this means you care about getting it fair, and that instinct is most of the job. If you'd like a hand placing cameras, drafting a notice and policy, or confirming the mics are off, I'm one call away at (330) 200-8042.

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 cameras and your employees feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it with your other business papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything — that's what the guide is for.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your place of business, 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'm a tech helper, not a licensed electrician or low-voltage contractor — for in-wall wiring or panel work I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro and make sure it all works together.

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Where Cameras Go at Work

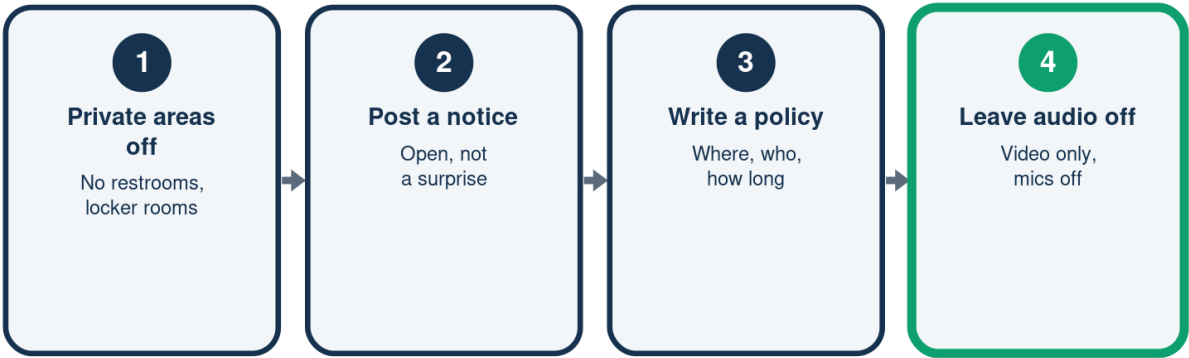
The valuable spots are also the ones with the fewest privacy worries

	Cameras OK?	Note
Sales floor	Yes	General area
Entrances	Yes	Who comes, goes
Break room	Caution	Gray area
Restroom	Never	Can be a crime
Locker room	Never	Can be a crime

Point cameras at places and things, not people in private moments.

Setting Up Cameras Fairly

Four steps that keep you both legal and trusted



Fair and legal pull in the same direction here.

A Short Camera Policy Covers

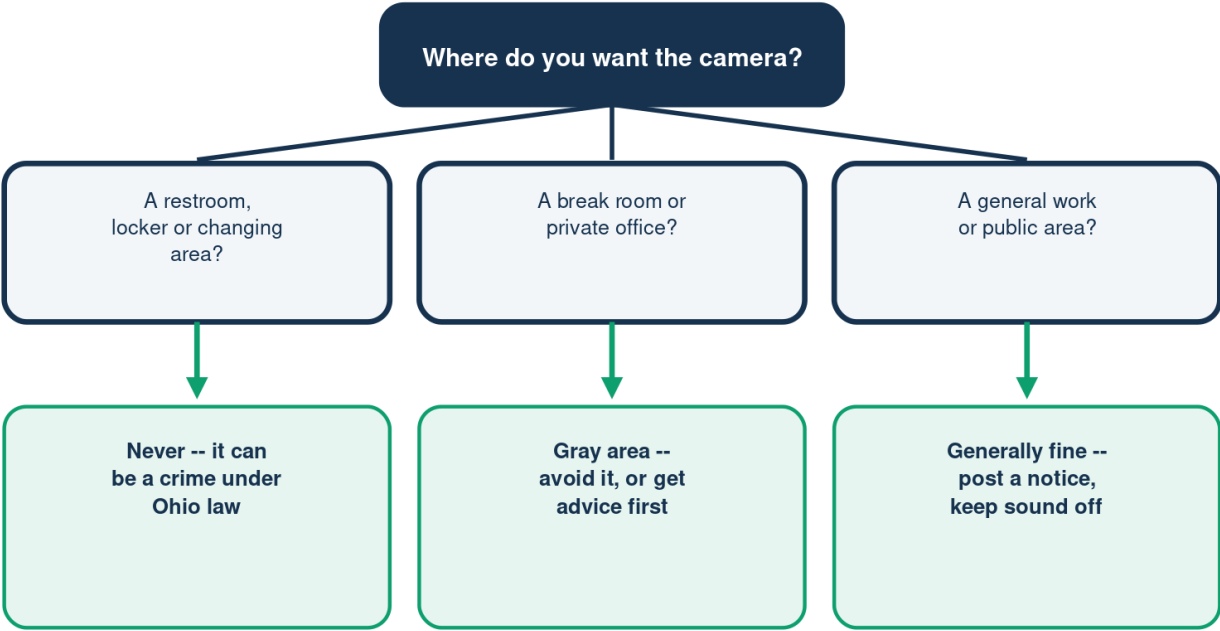
Four plain points settle most staff questions before they're asked

	Spell out	Why it helps
What	Where cameras are	No surprises
Sound	Video only	Avoids audio law
Access	Who can view	Builds trust
Keep	How long kept	Clear and fair

General information, not legal advice -- confirm with an attorney.

Can a Camera Go Here?

Three questions that place any camera fairly and legally



This is general information, not legal advice -- confirm with an Ohio attorney.

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



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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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