



An Extended Guide · No. 1788

A Multi-Day Outage Plan

When the power's out
for the long haul

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — when in doubt, throw it out

Here is the one rule that keeps your family safe when the power goes out: when in doubt, throw it out. Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors shut, and know the clock — a closed refrigerator keeps food safe for about 4 hours, and a full freezer holds its cold for about 48 hours (about 24 hours if it is only half full). Any perishable food — meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, soft cheese, cut fruit, and leftovers — that has been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for 2 hours or more should be thrown out. Never taste food to decide whether it is safe; many of the germs that cause food poisoning leave no smell, taste, or change you can see. Most outages are short, but the long ones reward a plan you made ahead of time.

The long-haul plan, for when it's not back in a few hours

Most power outages are over before the fridge even notices. This guide is for the other kind — the ones that stretch into a second day, or a third.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. A short outage barely tests your food-safety habits. A long one is different: it asks you to make real decisions on day two and day three that most people have never had to think through before.

This guide is that long-haul plan. It picks up where the basic 4-hour and 48-hour rules leave off, and walks you through the choices that come with an outage that just keeps going.

★ In the middle of a long one right now?

If you're on day two or three of an outage and trying to decide what to do next, call or text me at (330) 200-8042. I'd rather talk you through it than have you guess.

The whole plan, on one page

If you remember only these things, you already know most of what a multi-day outage asks of you.

- ❑ The moment the power quits, note the time.
- ❑ After about 4 hours, move fridge perishables into an iced cooler.
- ❑ A full freezer holds for about 48 hours closed; a half-full one, about 24 — know which one you have.
- ❑ Make a day-2 plan before that freezer clock runs out, not after.
- ❑ Day 2 options are dry ice, more ice, or relocating the food somewhere with power.
- ❑ Prioritize the fullest freezer, the most valuable food, and any refrigerated medicine.
- ❑ Keep records — times and thermometer readings — so you can decide clearly later.

✓ Plan for day 2 while you're still on day 1

The best time to line up dry ice, extra ice, or a place to relocate food is while the freezer still has hours left on the clock — not after it's already warming up.

The timeline a long outage follows

A multi-day outage moves through the same stages nearly every time. Knowing them ahead of time takes the guesswork out of each one.

It starts the moment the lights go out, and every hour after that follows a fairly predictable shape — as long as you know roughly where you are on the clock.

When	What's Happening
Hour 0	Note the time. The clock starts now.
About 4 hours	The closed fridge is done; cooler the food.
24 to 48 hours	The freezer starts to go, depending how full it is.

✓ **Write the start time down somewhere you'll see it**

A sticky note on the fridge with the exact time the power went out turns every decision after this into simple math instead of a guess.

Day one: settle in and protect what you can

The first day of a long outage looks just like the first day of any outage — the difference only shows up later.

Keep the fridge and freezer doors closed. After about 4 hours, move the fridge's perishables — meat, milk, eggs, leftovers — into a cooler packed with ice, kept at 40 degrees or below.

If you have a generator or a battery power station, this is the day to start cycling it sensibly rather than running it flat out. Think in stretches you can sustain for days, not hours.

- Doors closed on both the fridge and the freezer, as much as possible.
- Fridge perishables into an iced cooler after about 4 hours.
- Backup power, if you have it, run in planned stretches — not nonstop.
- A rough look at how full the freezer is, since that tells you how long it will hold.

✓ A full freezer buys you the most time

If you suspect an outage may run long, this is the day to fill empty freezer space with frozen water jugs. It costs nothing and buys real hours later.

Day two: the freezer's turn to worry about

By day two, the fridge question is long settled. The freezer is the one nearing its limit now.

A full freezer holds safe temperatures for about 48 hours closed; a half-full one for about 24. If you're closing in on that number with no end to the outage in sight, day two is when you act — not once the freezer has already started to thaw.

Three paths open up here: bring in dry ice, add more ice, or relocate the food somewhere with power. None of them is wrong — the one that fits depends on what's available to you and how much food is at stake.

! Act before the limit, not after

The freezer's clock doesn't pause to give you a warning. If you're planning to bring in dry ice or relocate food, start while there are still hours left, not once things are already warming up.

Dry ice: colder and stronger, for the long haul

For a big, full freezer on a long outage, dry ice is often the single most effective tool you can bring in.

Dry ice is frozen carbon dioxide, far colder than regular ice, and it can hold a chest or upright freezer safely cold for a good stretch of a long outage. It also needs careful handling.

- Handle it only with insulated gloves — never bare skin.
- Use it only in a ventilated space; it gives off carbon dioxide gas that can build up in a closed car or small room.
- Never seal it in an airtight container — the pressure can build and burst it.
- Put a layer of cardboard or newspaper between the dry ice and your food.
- Place it on top in a chest freezer or cooler, since cold sinks down through the unit.

✓ Ask your dry-ice supplier how much you need

How much dry ice to buy and how long it lasts depends on your freezer and the supplier's product, so ask them directly. I've also written a full guide just on dry-ice safety if you'd like more detail.

Sometimes the best move is a different address

When dry ice and extra ice aren't enough, or aren't available, moving the food somewhere with power is a perfectly good plan.

A friend or relative whose power is on can often take a freezer's worth of food for a couple of days without much trouble. A community cooling site or a local business you know may also help in a pinch.

Even a simple cooler run into town for a fresh bag of ice can buy your own freezer another day, if a full relocation isn't practical.

- A family member or friend with power is often the simplest option.
- Some communities open cooling or relief sites during a long outage — worth a call to check.
- Pack food in coolers with ice for the trip, the same way you would at home.
- A round trip to town for more ice can extend your own freezer's time at home.

★ Not sure who to call?

If you're trying to figure out where to take a freezer's worth of food on short notice, call me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll think it through together.

You can't save everything — so prioritize

A long outage sometimes forces choices. Knowing your order of priority ahead of time makes those choices much easier.

Put your effort toward the fullest freezer first, since it represents the most food and holds cold the longest anyway. Then think about which food is most valuable to you — a freezer full of garden produce or a special occasion's worth of meat deserves more attention than a half-empty drawer of odds and ends.

Refrigerated medicine belongs at the very top of that list. If you or someone in the house keeps medicine like insulin cold, ask your pharmacist or doctor about it directly — don't guess, and don't treat it the same as food.

! Medicine first, always

Food is replaceable. Medicine can be a genuine emergency. If there's any question about refrigerated medicine, your pharmacist or doctor is the right call to make, not a general guide like this one.

Backup power that lasts as long as the outage does

Running a generator or battery station for a couple of hours is one problem. Making it last across several days is another.

A gas generator can run for as many days as you can safely fuel it, but it must stay outdoors, at least 20 feet from the house, with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent — its exhaust carries carbon monoxide, an invisible gas that can kill in minutes.

A battery or solar power station makes no exhaust, so it's safe indoors, but it needs a plan too — recharging from solar, a car, or the wall once power is available somewhere. Over several days, think in cycles: run it, recharge or refuel it, and run it again, rather than trying to keep it going nonstop.

✓ Sizing and fueling have their own guides

How big a generator or battery station you need, and how to fuel or recharge it safely, are worth their own careful read — see my sizing and fuel guides for the details.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

A multi-day outage can look very different depending on where you live and what's backing you up.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, a multi-day outage is less common, and power usually returns within a day. A cooler and some ice often bridge the whole thing, and a store run for more ice is usually not far away.

- Power typically returns within a day or so, which keeps the plan simple.
- A cooler with ice can bridge most of the gap on its own.
- A nearby store or gas station is often still open for an ice run.
- One fridge and one freezer keep the decisions few and manageable.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a private well, multi-day outages are common, and the stakes are higher — there's often more food at stake, and the well pump needs power too. That means the fridge shares its backup plan with the water supply.

- Longer outages are the norm, not the exception, so plan for days rather than hours.
- A bigger plan helps — more fuel on hand, more ice, and a real day-2 option lined up ahead of time.
- The well pump needs power just like the fridge does, so backup power is often shared between the two.
- A generator or battery station sized for both jobs is worth planning for before the outage, not during it.

★ Somewhere in between?

Plenty of homes are a mix of both. Tell me how your outages usually go and what you're protecting, and I'll help you build a plan sized to fit. Call (330) 200-8042.

For rural readers: the fridge shares the plan with the well

If your water comes from a private well, a multi-day outage is really two problems at once, not one.

A well pump needs electricity to bring water into the house, same as the fridge needs it to stay cold. When backup power is limited, both jobs are competing for the same generator or battery station.

That's worth planning for ahead of time rather than discovering it mid-outage. Think through how you'll cycle backup power between the well pump, the fridge and freezer, and anything else that truly needs it, so nothing gets left out by accident.

✓ Store some water ahead of a forecasted storm

If you're on a well and a storm is coming, filling some clean containers with water ahead of time takes one job off the generator's plate for at least the first stretch of the outage.

! Read this first — carbon monoxide is the real danger

A running gas generator's exhaust contains carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill in minutes. Never run a gas generator indoors, in a garage, in a shed, or on a porch, not even with the door open and a fan going. Run it outside only, well away from the house — the safety agencies say at least 20 feet — with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent. Put battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on each floor and outside the bedrooms. A battery or solar power station is the safe indoor alternative — it makes no exhaust at all. Refueling is exactly the moment when carbon monoxide mistakes happen, so it deserves its own careful routine.

Refueling day after day, safely

A generator that runs for days needs fuel more than once, and each refuel is a moment to slow down and do it right.

Always let the generator run off and cool down completely before refueling it. A hot engine and spilled gasoline are a bad combination, and it only takes a moment of carelessness.

- Shut it off and let it cool before adding any fuel.
- Store fuel in approved containers, away from the house and out of living spaces.
- Keep the generator itself outdoors and away from the house the whole time, refueling included.
- Keep battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on each floor for the whole outage, not just while it's running.

Write it down as you go

A long outage has a lot of moving parts. A simple written record turns a foggy few days into a clear decision later.

Note the time the power went out, and jot down thermometer readings from the fridge and freezer every so often as the outage goes on. If you cycle a generator or battery station, a quick note of when and for how long helps too.

None of this needs to be fancy — a notepad on the counter or a note on your phone works fine. What matters is having real numbers to look back on instead of trying to remember three stressful days later.

✓ A simple log beats a good memory

When the power finally comes back, those notes are exactly what let you decide clearly what's safe to keep, instead of guessing under pressure.

A quiet option for overnight

One of the best uses for a battery power station in a multi-day outage is the simplest: running the fridge overnight.

✓ A battery power station is safe to use indoors

Unlike a gas generator, a battery or solar power station makes no exhaust and no carbon monoxide, so it is safe to run inside the house right next to the refrigerator. A gas generator is the opposite — it must always run outdoors, well away from doors, windows, and vents.

Running a generator through the night means either leaving it running outdoors unattended or waking up to refuel it — and it means engine noise near the house all night long. A charged battery station can quietly carry the fridge and freezer through the night instead, right from indoors, with nothing to check on until morning.

✓ Charge it during the day, use it at night

A simple rhythm works well over several days: recharge the battery station from solar, a car, or the wall during the day, then let it carry the fridge quietly through the night.

The big check, once the lights come back on

After a multi-day outage, this is the moment all your notes and records pay off.

Check your thermometers first. If the fridge held at 40 degrees or below, that food is fine. If the freezer still has ice crystals or reads 40 degrees or below, it's safe to refreeze or cook.

Anything that sat above 40 degrees for 2 hours or more should be thrown out, no matter how it looks or smells. With a multi-day outage, go shelf by shelf and container by container — it's worth the extra few minutes to get it right.

- Read both thermometers before you decide anything.
- Apply the 2-hour rule to every perishable item, not just the ones that look questionable.
- Freezer food with ice crystals or at 40 degrees or below is safe to refreeze.
- When in doubt about any single item, throw it out.

! Don't rush this step

After days of careful work, it's tempting to just restock and move on. Take the extra few minutes to check thermometers and apply the 2-hour rule properly — it's the whole point of everything before it.

The human side of a long outage

A multi-day outage wears people down in ways that have nothing to do with food safety, and that's worth acknowledging.

By day two or three, everyone in the house is tired of flashlights, tired of the quiet, and tired of thinking about the fridge. That's normal. Simple routines help more than they sound like they would — regular mealtimes, a set time to check in with neighbors or family, and small comforts you can control.

If you can manage one warm meal a day, even something simple cooked on a grill or camp stove outdoors, it does a lot for morale. You don't have to be perfectly efficient about every single hour — you just have to keep the food-safety basics in place and take care of each other.

★ You're doing fine

Most people handle a long outage better than they expect to. If you need a friendly voice partway through, that's what I'm here for — call (330) 200-8042.

Common mistakes over a long outage

A few avoidable slip-ups account for most of the trouble I see during outages that run more than a day.

- **No day-2 plan** — waiting until the freezer is already warming up to think about dry ice or relocating food.
- **Letting the freezer thaw unwatched**, instead of checking on it as the hours add up.
- **Running out of fuel** partway through, with no backup plan for keeping backup power going.
- **Forgetting medicine** in the rush to protect food, when it should come first.
- **Not keeping records**, which turns an easy decision later into a stressful guess.

! The pattern behind most of these

Almost every one of these mistakes comes from treating a multi-day outage like a short one, and only starting to plan once trouble is already showing up.

What to have on hand for the long haul

A little preparation ahead of a forecasted storm makes every day of a long outage easier.

- ❑ One or more coolers, sized for a fridge's worth of food.
- ❑ Ice on hand or nearby — block and cubes both have their uses.
- ❑ A few frozen water jugs tucked into freezer space.
- ❑ Fuel for a generator, or a charged battery power station.
- ❑ An appliance thermometer in both the fridge and the freezer.
- ❑ My number, saved somewhere you'll actually find it: (330) 200-8042.

✓ Build the kit before the forecast, not during it

Ice, fuel, and coolers get scarce fast once a storm is already bearing down. A kit assembled ahead of time is worth far more than one you're trying to buy at the last minute.

Knowing when it's time to let food go

Even the best plan sometimes runs out of road. It helps to know, ahead of time, what that looks like.

If the freezer has gone past its safe holding time with no dry ice, no extra ice, and no backup power to fall back on, follow the same rules you would after any outage: look for ice crystals or a reading of 40 degrees or below, and apply the 2-hour rule to anything that warmed past 40 degrees.

It's a hard moment — nobody likes throwing out a freezer's worth of food. But the rule that's carried this whole guide holds just as true on day three as it does on day one.

! When in doubt, throw it out

This doesn't change no matter how many days the outage has run. If you can't be sure how long something sat warm, or whether it still has ice crystals, don't gamble on it.

Print this page for the long haul

A quick-reference card for a multi-day outage, worth keeping right on the fridge door.

- ☐ Power out? Note the time right away.
- ☐ After about 4 hours, cooler the fridge food.
- ☐ By day 2, protect the freezer — dry ice, more ice, or relocate.
- ☐ Prioritize the fullest freezer, the most valuable food, and any medicine.
- ☐ When in doubt about any food, throw it out.

★ Keep my number on this card too

Tape my number right next to this list: (330) 200-8042. A quick call costs nothing, any day of the outage.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks in the middle of a long outage.

Q: How long will my freezer really last?

About 48 hours closed if it's full, or about 24 if it's only half full. A full freezer always holds cold longer, so filling empty space with frozen water jugs ahead of time helps.

Q: What do I do on day 2?

That's when you act on the freezer, before it reaches its limit: bring in dry ice, add more ice, or relocate the food somewhere with power. Start while there are still hours left on the clock.

Q: Where can I get dry ice?

Check with local grocery stores, ice suppliers, or a dedicated dry-ice supplier — ask them how much you'll need for your freezer, since that depends on its size and how it's packed.

Q: Should I move my food somewhere else?

It's a good option if dry ice or extra ice aren't available. A friend or relative with power, or a community cooling site, can often take a freezer's worth of food for a couple of days.

Q: What about my medicine?

Ask your pharmacist — they know the specifics for your medicine. Keep it in a cooler in the meantime, and don't guess based on general food-safety rules.

★ Still have a question?

A long outage raises questions a short one never does. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll work through it together.

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 planning for a multi-day power outage 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.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

A Multi-Day Outage

Stay ahead of the clock



Plan day 2 before the freezer reaches its limit.

Hour by Hour

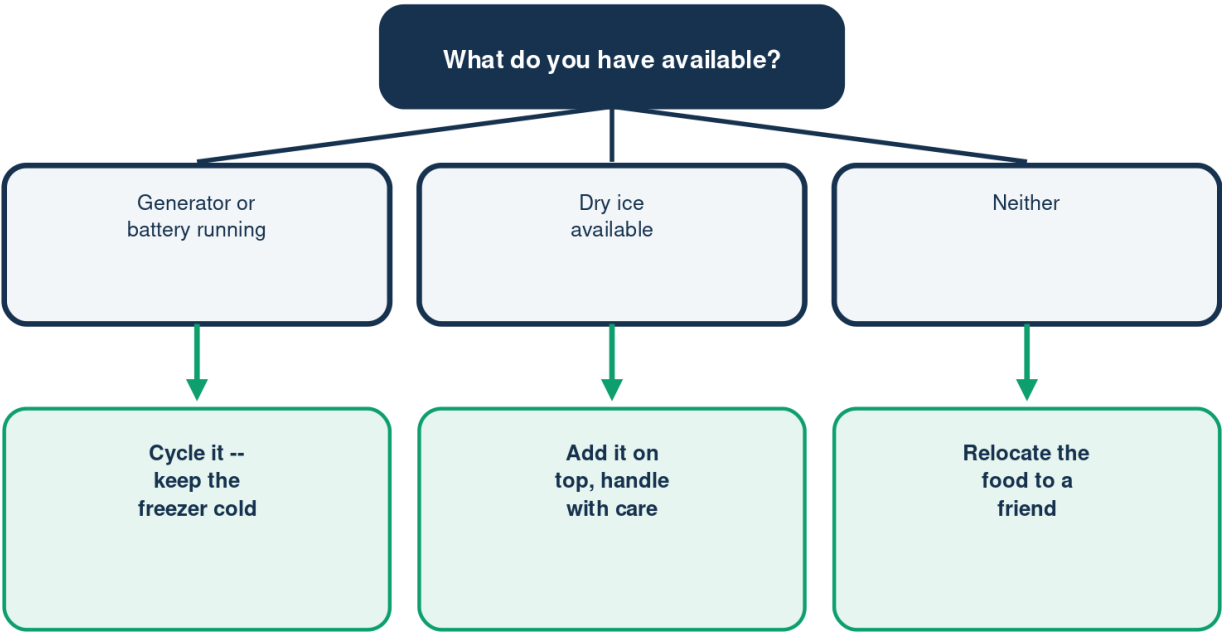
Know your windows

	Holds For	Then
Refrigerator	About 4 hours	Cooler it
Full freezer	About 48 hours	Dry ice/relocate
Half freezer	About 24 hours	Act sooner
Act before	The limit	Not after

Doors closed the whole time.

Day 2: What Now?

The freezer is nearing its limit



Prioritize the fullest freezer, the most valuable food, and medicine.

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

Long-Outage Priorities

Spend your effort well

	Priority	Action
Fulllest freezer	Protect it	Dry ice, cycle
Refrigerated medicine	Protect it	Cooler + pharmacist
Drinks fridge	Skip it	Low stakes
Any doubt	Toss it	Don't risk it

When in doubt, throw it out.



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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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