



An Extended Guide · No. 1617

Storing Gasoline Safely at Home

Approved cans, the right
spot, and no worries

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

Free & printable — share it with someone who needs it



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

! Read this first — carbon monoxide is the real danger

A running generator's exhaust contains carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill in minutes. Never run a 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. If an alarm sounds, or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone into fresh air first and ask questions later. Gasoline also gives off vapors that can catch fire from a spark or pilot light you never see, so we will treat the fuel with the same care we treat the exhaust.

Let's store your gasoline the safe way

Gasoline is one of the most useful things in the garage and one of the most misunderstood. Stored well, it is perfectly safe and ready when you need it. Stored carelessly, it is a real fire risk. This guide walks you through doing it right, one plain step at a time.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks feel calm and confident about the everyday things around their homes — and few things reward a little know-how like a can of gas in the corner of the garage.

We'll start with the container, because that is where safe storage truly begins, then move to where it should live and how to keep it in good shape. No jargon, no scare tactics — just the sensible habits that keep you and your home safe.

★ There's no silly question here

If you're ever unsure whether your gas can or your storage spot is safe, that's exactly the kind of thing I'm glad to look at. Describe it to me, or I'll come see it in person. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, your gasoline will be stored safely and ready to use.

- ❑ Use only an approved gas can — one built and rated for fuel, with a tight, self-venting cap. Never a milk jug, water bottle, or old container.
- ❑ Buy a size you can comfortably lift when it's full, not the biggest one on the shelf.
- ❑ Store it detached from the house — a detached shed or the far corner of the garage — away from any flame, spark, or pilot light.
- ❑ Keep it out of direct sun and off to the side where it won't get knocked over or driven into.
- ❑ Label and date every can so you always know how old the fuel is.
- ❑ Keep the amount modest, and check your local fire code before storing more than a couple of cans.

✓ The container is the whole foundation

Get the can right and you've solved most of the safety question before you even think about where to put it. A good can is cheap insurance.

Start with the right container

The can matters just as much as the fuel inside it — maybe more.

A proper gas can is engineered to do three quiet jobs at once: hold the fuel without leaking, control the vapor so it doesn't build up or escape, and survive years of being bumped, tipped, and hauled around. A random jug does none of those things well.

This is why the rule is so simple and so firm: gasoline goes in a container that was made and rated for gasoline, and nothing else. It's the single easiest safety decision you'll make, and the one that prevents the most trouble.

! Never improvise a fuel container

Milk jugs, water bottles, glass jars, and old cleaning-product containers are all genuinely dangerous for gasoline. They can crack, melt, build up static, leak vapor, or be mistaken for something drinkable. Only ever use a can rated for fuel.

What an approved gas can actually is

You don't need to memorize standards — just know what to look for on the shelf.

An approved gas can is one built to a recognized safety standard for portable fuel containers. On the store shelf, these are the ordinary red cans (red is the standard color for gasoline) sold specifically for fuel. You'll often see it described as a 'portable fuel container' or a 'safety can.'

- A tight cap that seals fully and won't drip if the can tips.
- A spout designed to pour without glugging and splashing.
- Venting built into the can or cap so it pours smoothly and manages vapor safely.
- Sturdy walls that resist cracking, and a color and markings that make it clearly a fuel can.

✓ Buy it where they sell fuel gear

Any hardware store, home center, or auto-parts store carries approved gas cans. If a container isn't sold for fuel, it isn't the right one — no matter how sturdy it looks.

Metal or plastic — does it matter?

Both are fine when they're approved and in good shape. Here's how to choose between them.

Most folks reach for a plastic can, and that's perfectly sensible — they're light, affordable, and won't rust. Metal safety cans cost more and weigh more, but they're extremely tough and some people prefer them for long-term storage. Neither is 'the safe one' and the other the risky one; a good example of either does the job.

	Plastic can	Metal safety can
Weight	Lighter	Heavier
Cost	Lower	Higher
Rust	Never rusts	Can rust if damaged
Toughness	Good	Very tough

✓ **Condition matters more than material**

A cracked plastic can and a rusted-through metal one are both trouble. Whichever you choose, the habit that keeps you safe is checking its condition now and then — we cover what to look for a few pages on.

Pick a size you can actually handle

This page is especially for those of us who aren't as strong as we once were — and it's the tip people thank me for most.

Gasoline is surprisingly heavy, and a large can filled to the top can be a real strain to lift, carry, and tip to pour. A strained back or a can that slips from your grip is how spills and injuries happen. Bigger is not better here.

For most people, two smaller cans are far easier to live with than one big one. They're lighter to carry, easier to pour without splashing, and simpler to lift into the trunk for a refill. Let your own comfort, not the shelf, decide the size.

★ Let's find a size that suits you

If lifting and pouring have gotten harder, that's worth planning around, not powering through. I'm happy to help you pick a can and a pouring setup that's easy on your back and hands. Call (330) 200-8042.

The cap, the spout, and the vent

The parts you actually touch are worth understanding, because they're where spills and frustration usually start.

Modern gas cans have a child-resistant, self-closing spout that springs shut when you're not actively pouring. It's a genuine safety improvement, but it can be fiddly, especially with arthritis. Learn how yours works on a calm afternoon, not while you're trying to fuel a generator in the dark.

- Press or squeeze as the design requires — forcing it usually makes it worse. There's a knack, and it comes quickly with practice.
- Keep the cap and spout clean; grit and old fuel residue make them stick.
- If a spout is cracked or won't seal, replace it — approved replacement spouts are sold separately.
- Always close the cap fully after pouring, even for a quick job.

✓ Practice makes it painless

If a self-closing spout is fighting you, you're not doing it wrong — they take a little getting used to. A few minutes of practice with an empty can turns a wrestling match into a habit.

Filling the can safely at the station

How you fill the can is a safety step in its own right — and one most people have never been taught.

The important habit at the pump is to set the can on the ground to fill it, never in the bed of a truck, on a tailgate, or on a car seat. Fuel flowing into a container can build up a small static charge, and a static spark near gasoline vapor is exactly the danger we're avoiding. The ground safely carries that charge away.

- Put the can on the ground, well away from traffic, before you fill.
- Keep the pump nozzle in contact with the can's opening as you fill.
- Fill slowly and stop a little short of the top, so the fuel has room to expand.
- Cap it tightly and wipe the outside before it goes in your vehicle.

! No fuel in an enclosed vehicle space

Never fill a can inside a closed trunk, on a truck's plastic bed liner, or on a seat. Set it on the ground. There's a whole guide in this set on static and fire safety when refueling — but this one habit prevents most of the risk.

Label and date every can

A strip of tape and a marker is one of the cheapest safety tools you own.

Write what's in the can and the date you filled it, right on the side. It sounds almost too simple, but it does two important jobs: it tells you at a glance how old the fuel is, and it keeps anyone else in the house from mistaking the can for something it isn't.

If you keep more than one fuel — say gasoline for the generator and a mixed fuel for a trimmer — clear labels prevent the kind of mix-up that harms an engine. When in doubt, label it plainly.

✓ Dating the can does the remembering for you

Fuel loses its freshness with time, and none of us can recall when we filled a can months ago. The date on the side settles the question honestly. Our guide on how much fuel to keep and how to rotate it builds a simple habit around that date.

Where the can should live

Location does more for safety than almost anything else you'll decide — so here's the short version, with a whole guide to back it up.

Gasoline belongs in a cool, ventilated spot away from where people sleep and, above all, away from anything that can spark or hold a flame. A detached shed is ideal; the far corner of a garage can work if it's well clear of the water heater, furnace, and any pilot light.

- Never in the house, a basement, or a living space.
- Away from the water heater, furnace, or any appliance with a pilot light or burner.
- Out of direct summer sun and off any heat source.
- Up off the floor's path of travel, where it won't be knocked over or driven into.

! Vapor travels farther than you'd think

Gasoline vapor is heavier than air and can drift along the floor to a pilot light across the room. Our guide on where never to store fuel goes into this in full — it's worth reading alongside this one.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Where you live shapes how much gasoline you'd keep and where it can safely go — and the rules that apply to you.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or a close-in suburb, a station is usually a short drive away even during an outage, and storage space tends to be tighter. That naturally keeps the amount you'd store modest — which is the safe side to be on.

- A single approved can, or two, covers most short outages in town.
- Check whether your city or neighborhood association limits fuel storage or where it can be kept — many do.
- An attached garage is common in town; keep the can well away from the water heater and any pilot light, or use a detached spot if you have one.
- Less to store means less to rotate and less fire load in your garage.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, the nearest open station may be a real drive, especially in a widespread outage, and if you're on a well, running out of fuel can mean running out of water too. You'll likely keep a bit more on hand.

- A detached shed or barn, away from the house, is the ideal home for a larger reserve.
- Even with more cans, keep each a size you can lift, and rotate them faithfully.
- Store fuel well clear of any tractor, workshop, or outbuilding heat source or welding area.
- Ask your local fire department about limits for a rural property before you build up a big supply.

★ Not sure how much is right for you?

Tell me how far you are from a station and how long your outages usually run, and I'll help you land on a sensible amount to keep — enough to be ready, not so much it's a hazard. Call (330) 200-8042.

Keeping stored gasoline fresh

Safe storage and fresh fuel go hand in hand — here's the short version, with dedicated guides for the details.

Gasoline doesn't wait forever. Left alone it begins to lose its punch and can gum up an engine's carburetor over a matter of months. Two simple habits keep it ready: a fuel stabilizer added when you fill the can, and a rotation habit so the oldest fuel gets used first.

If you're storing fuel for a while rather than using it right away, it's also worth seeking out ethanol-free gasoline, which generally holds up better in storage. Each of these has its own guide in this set, so here I'll just say: fresh fuel is safe fuel, and a little planning keeps it that way.

✓ Three short guides, one goal

Our stabilizer guide, our how-much-and-rotation guide, and our ethanol-free guide together make keeping fuel fresh almost automatic. You don't have to read them all at once — start with whichever worries you most.

Inspecting and retiring old cans

A gas can doesn't last forever, and a failing one is a quiet hazard. A quick look now and then is all it takes.

Every so often, give your cans a once-over in good light. You're looking for anything that could let fuel or vapor escape, or that means the can is nearing the end of its useful life.

- Cracks, splits, or a plastic can that's gone brittle or faded from sun.
- A cap or spout that no longer seals tightly, or a missing gasket.
- Swelling, bulging, or a can that seems to weep or smell even when closed.
- On a metal can, rust — especially at the seams or bottom.

! When in doubt, retire it

A questionable can isn't worth the risk for the few dollars a new one costs. Empty a failing can into a good one, let the old one air out fully, and take it to your local household hazardous waste site — our guide on disposing of old fuel and cans covers exactly how.

Common mistakes people make

A handful of avoidable habits account for most gasoline-storage trouble. Now you'll know them in advance.

- **Using a random jug or bottle** instead of an approved can — the single most dangerous shortcut.
- **Buying the biggest can** and then being unable to lift or pour it without a spill.
- **Storing it by the water heater**, a few feet from a live pilot light.
- **Leaving the cap loose** so vapor escapes into the storage space.
- **Never checking the can's age or condition** until the day it fails or the fuel won't start the engine.

! One of these is not like the others

Most of these cost you money or a headache. Storing gasoline in a makeshift container, or right next to a flame, can cost far more than that. If anything here describes your setup, it's worth fixing today.

How much you can keep — and who decides

This is one place where I won't give you a number, and I'll explain why that's the honest answer.

How much gasoline you're allowed to store at a home is set by your local fire code, and it can differ from one town or county to the next. Rather than guess at a figure that might be wrong for your address, the right move is to ask the people who actually set the rule.

A quick, friendly call to your local fire department will tell you the limit where you live, especially if you're thinking about keeping more than a couple of standard cans. They deal with this question all the time and are glad to help.

✓ A dedicated guide on the rules

Our guide on fuel storage and your local fire code walks through how to ask, what the limits are usually about, and why keeping a modest amount is the safer habit regardless of the exact number.

Keeping people and pets safe around it

Where fuel is stored is a place to think about the whole household, not just the fuel.

Store gasoline where curious children and pets can't reach it or knock it over — up off the floor's main path, and ideally in a spot that latches. The self-closing spout on modern cans helps, but it's no substitute for keeping the can somewhere little hands don't go.

Keep the area around it uncluttered, too. Rags, cardboard, and piled boxes near a fuel can turn a small spill into a bigger problem and make it harder to spot a leak. A little breathing room around the can is part of storing it safely.

! Oily rags deserve their own caution

Rags soaked with gasoline or oil can, in the right conditions, heat up on their own. Never pile them near stored fuel. Let them dry outdoors, then store them in a sealed metal container or dispose of them as your local waste authority advises.

Questions worth asking

Whether you're at the hardware store or asking me, these get you real answers.

Q: Is this can actually approved for gasoline?

Look for a red can sold specifically as a fuel or 'portable fuel container,' with a sealing cap and a self-closing spout. If it's not sold for fuel, it's not the right can.

Q: Metal or plastic — which should I buy?

Either, when it's approved and in good shape. Plastic is lighter and cheaper; metal is heavier and very tough. Choose what you can handle comfortably.

Q: How big a can should I get?

One you can lift, carry, and pour when it's full without straining. Two smaller cans usually beat one big one, especially as we get older.

Q: How much can I store at home?

That's set by your local fire code. Call your local fire department for the limit at your address before storing more than a couple of cans.

✓ There's no silly question

Fuel questions can feel like something you're supposed to already know. You're not. Ask until you're confident — that's exactly how you stay safe.

A simple gasoline-storage checklist

Walk through this on a calm afternoon, not during a storm warning.

- ☐ My gas is in an approved, red fuel can with a sealing cap.
- ☐ The can is a size I can lift and pour comfortably when full.
- ☐ The cap and spout close fully and don't leak or stick.
- ☐ The can is labeled with what's in it and the date I filled it.
- ☐ It's stored detached from living space, away from any flame or pilot light.
- ☐ It's out of direct sun, up off the traffic path, and clear of clutter.
- ☐ I've checked with my fire department if I'm keeping more than a couple of cans.

★ I'll happily check it with you

If you'd like a second set of eyes on your cans and your storage spot, that's a quick, worthwhile visit. Peace of mind about fuel in the garage is worth a phone call. (330) 200-8042.

Fire and vapor safety, taken seriously

Gasoline is a fuel, but it's also one of the most common fire hazards in an ordinary garage. A few steady habits keep it firmly on the safe side.

The danger with gasoline is less the liquid than the vapor it gives off. That vapor is flammable at levels you might not smell, and because it's heavier than air, it can pool low and drift toward a spark or flame well across the room.

So the rules are simple and worth holding firmly: no smoking, sparks, or open flame anywhere near where fuel is stored or handled; keep cans capped and away from heat; and clean up any spill right away and let it air out fully before bringing anything flammable near.

! Know where your extinguisher is

A working fire extinguisher rated for flammable liquids, kept near (but not right beside) where you store fuel, is a sensible thing to own and to know how to use. If you're not sure yours is right or still charged, that's worth checking today.

Common Questions

The gasoline-storage questions I hear most often, answered plainly.

Q: Can I store gasoline in my attached garage?

It's common, but only if you keep the can well away from the water heater, furnace, or any pilot light, and the space is ventilated. A detached shed is safer still. Never in the house or basement.

Q: Why does my new gas can have such a tricky spout?

Modern cans use child-resistant, self-closing spouts for safety. They take practice, but they genuinely reduce spills and vapor. Learn yours on an empty can first.

Q: Is it safe to keep gas cans on a shelf?

A sturdy, low shelf out of direct sun and away from heat is fine, as long as the can can't be knocked off and the shelf can bear the weight. Keeping it up and out of the way also helps with kids and pets.

Q: My old can smells even when it's closed — is that normal?

A faint smell can be normal, but a can that clearly weeps or smells strong when sealed may be failing. Move the fuel to a good can and retire the old one at a hazardous waste site.

★ Still have a question on your mind?

That's what I'm here for. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll give you a plain, honest answer — and if it's easier to just show me, I'll come take a look.

How this fits with the rest

Safe gasoline storage is one piece of being ready — here's how the pieces connect.

This guide focused on the container and the basics of storing gasoline safely. To keep that fuel fresh, see our guides on fuel stabilizer, on how much to keep and how to rotate it, and on ethanol-free gasoline. To be sure your storage spot is a wise one, our guide on where never to store fuel is the natural next read.

And when it comes time to move fuel, clean up a spill, or get rid of an old can or stale gas, there are dedicated guides for each of those too. You don't have to read them all — just reach for the one that matches the question in front of you.

★ One call covers all of it

You don't have to sort out which guide answers which question. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, describe your setup, and I'll tell you plainly what you're doing well and what's worth changing.

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 storing gasoline safely at home 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

Approved Gas Can vs. What to Avoid

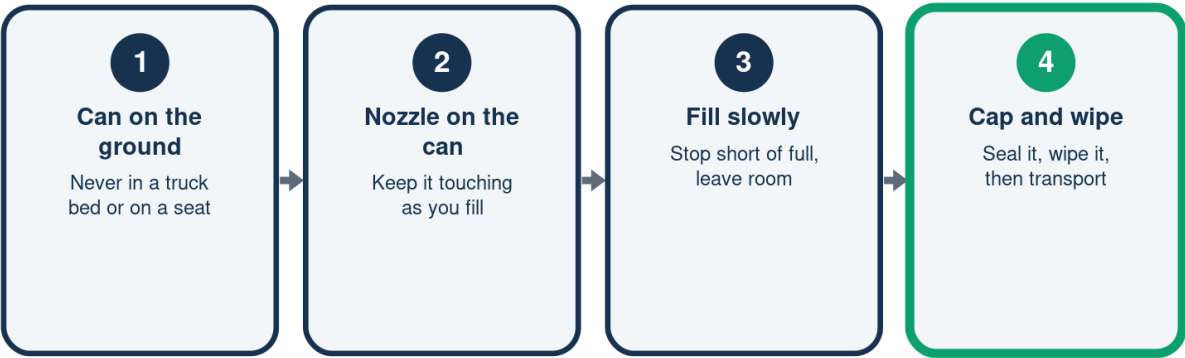
The single most important storage decision

	Use this	Never this
Container	Rated fuel can	Jug, bottle, jar
Cap	Sealing, self-close	Loose or missing
Color	Red, marked fuel	Unmarked
Condition	Sound, no cracks	Cracked or rusty

If it wasn't sold for fuel, it isn't the right container.

Filling a Gas Can Safely

Four habits that prevent most of the risk



Setting the can on the ground safely carries off static.

Metal vs. Plastic Gas Cans

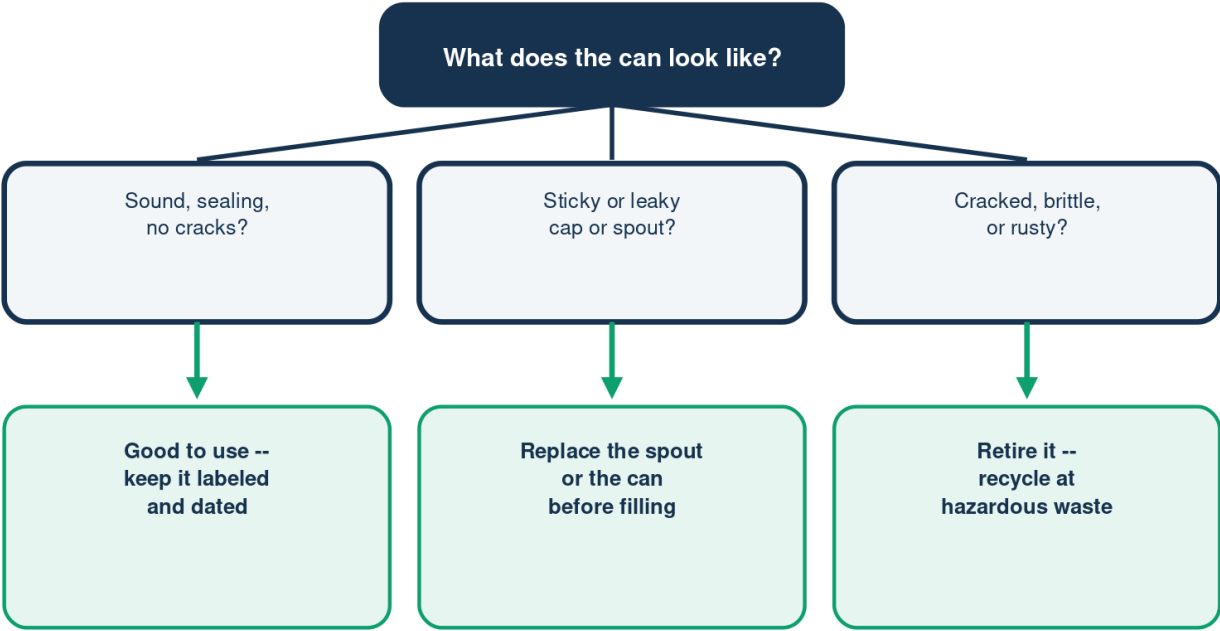
Both are fine when approved and sound

	Plastic	Metal
Weight	Lighter	Heavier
Cost	Lower	Higher
Rust	Never rusts	Can rust
Toughness	Good	Very tough

Condition matters more than which material you pick.

Is This Can Still Safe to Use?

A quick look before you trust it



When in doubt, retire it -- a new can costs far less than a fire.

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



Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will
make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness,
no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



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*



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

Use of these guides is subject to our Terms of Use (billshometech.com/terms-of-use).

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

For general information only — not professional advice. Use at your own risk. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech