



An Extended Guide · No. 1636

Getting Fuel Ready for a Storm — Without Hoarding

Calm, safe prep
instead of a panic buy

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! 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. A storm warning is exactly the wrong moment to test a generator for the first time or rush out for fuel, so this guide is about getting ready calmly, days ahead, instead of in a last-minute scramble.

Let's get your fuel ready for a storm — calmly

When a storm is in the forecast, the best kind of ready is boring: a quick top-up, a test start, and you're done. This guide walks through exactly what that looks like, and just as importantly, what to avoid.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. Every storm season I see two very different households: the ones who spend an easy twenty minutes getting ready, and the ones racing a crowded gas station line with the wind already picking up.

The difference almost never comes down to luck. It comes down to a fuel supply that was already rotated and ready, and a short, calm checklist followed a few days ahead of the storm — not the night before.

★ There's no silly question here

If a storm's on the way and you're not sure your setup is ready, that's exactly the kind of thing I'm glad to help with, in person or over the phone. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you'll be ready for a storm without ever hoarding fuel.

- ❑ If you already keep fuel rotated year-round, storm prep is mostly a top-up and a test start.
- ❑ A few days before, confirm the generator actually starts and runs.
- ❑ Top up your rotated gas cans, and check that propane cylinders are full and sound.
- ❑ On a well, store some drinking water — no power can mean no water.
- ❑ Confirm your carbon monoxide alarms work and have fresh batteries.
- ❑ Do not panic-buy a big last-minute stash — it's a fire risk and mostly fuel you can't rotate.

✓ Ready beats reactive

The whole secret is doing this a few quiet days ahead, not the night the sirens are already going. Calm preparation and panic buying look completely different, and only one of them is safe.

If you already rotate your fuel, you're most of the way there

This whole guide is easier for one simple reason: readiness is mostly something you did months ago, not something you do tonight.

Our guide on how much fuel to keep and how to rotate it covers the habit in full, but here's the payoff: if you keep a modest, dated supply and use the oldest fuel first, a storm warning doesn't ask much of you. You're not starting from zero — you're just topping off a supply that was already fresh.

That calm position is the entire reward for the rotation habit. The households who scramble are almost always the ones who let their fuel and their generator sit untouched and untested since the last outage.

✓ The reward for a boring habit

A rotated, ready supply turns a storm warning into a twenty-minute errand instead of an emergency. That's worth more than any amount of extra fuel in the corner of the garage.

Step one: make sure the generator actually starts

This is the single most valuable thing you can do before a storm, and it takes only a few minutes.

A few days ahead, not the night of, start the generator outdoors and let it run for a while under some load. This tells you, while you still have time to act on it, whether the fuel is good and the engine is happy.

- Run it outdoors, well away from the house, following the same safety habits you'd use during an outage.
- Let it run long enough to be confident it's not just sputtering to life and stalling.
- If it struggles to start, that's valuable news now — while a dealer or I still have time to help.
- If it runs fine, you've just earned yourself real peace of mind.

★ If it doesn't start smoothly

A generator that struggles to start a few days before a storm is a solvable problem today, and a much harder one during the outage. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and let's sort it out early.

Step two: top up your rotated fuel cans

If your supply is already rotated, this step is refreshingly small.

Check each can's level and date, and top up with fresh fuel where needed. This is also a good moment to add stabilizer to anything that's going to sit for a while — our stabilizer guide covers how and when.

Resist the urge to buy several extra cans just because a storm is coming. A modest, topped-off supply you can actually store safely and rotate afterward is the goal — not a stash that fills the garage for one event and then goes stale.

✓ Top up, don't multiply

The goal is bringing your existing, sensible supply up to full — not adding several new containers you'll have nowhere safe to keep.

Step three: check that propane cylinders are full and sound

Propane makes this step easy, since the fuel itself doesn't go stale.

Check that your cylinders are full, or arrange a refill or exchange, and give each one a quick look for damage, dents, or rust — our propane cylinder storage guide covers exactly what to look for and how to store them.

Because propane stores for years, this step is mostly about quantity and condition, not freshness. A cylinder that was fine last season is very likely fine now, but a quick look costs nothing and confirms it.

✓ Propane's one real advantage here

There's no rotation clock running on propane. Check the level and the cylinder's condition, and you're essentially done with this step.

Step four: store some drinking water if you're on a well

This one isn't about fuel directly, but it belongs on this checklist — especially if your water comes from a well.

A well pump runs on electricity, so when the power stops, so does your water, until the generator is running and powering the pump. Storing some drinking water ahead of a storm means you're not depending on the generator starting perfectly, the very first minute, for something as basic as a glass of water.

This matters far less on city water, which typically keeps flowing through an outage. But if you're on a well, treat drinking water as part of your storm checklist, right alongside the fuel itself.

! Water and fuel, planned together

On a well, running out of fuel and running out of water can happen at the same time. Planning for both together, ahead of the storm, is worth the extra few minutes.

Step five: confirm your carbon monoxide alarms work

A generator is about to run more than usual — this is the moment to be sure your alarms are ready too.

Test each carbon monoxide alarm using its test button, and check the battery or battery backup. Our carbon monoxide guide covers where alarms belong and how to test them properly — a storm, when a generator is likely to run for hours at a stretch, is exactly when you want full confidence in them.

This takes only a couple of minutes and is easy to skip in the rush of other preparations. Don't let it be the one thing you meant to check but didn't.

! Alarms matter more, not less, during a storm

Longer generator runtimes and a tired household are exactly the conditions where a working carbon monoxide alarm earns its keep.

Why a last-minute stash works against you

It feels responsible to buy as much fuel as possible before a storm. It usually isn't.

A big, last-minute stash of gasoline is a bigger fire load sitting in your garage or shed, right at the moment your household is busiest and most distracted. It's also very likely more fuel than you can safely store within your local fire code — our guide on fuel storage and your local fire code covers how to find that limit.

And there's a quieter problem: fuel bought in a panic, under stress, in whatever containers were left on the shelf, is exactly the fuel that tends to sit forgotten and go stale once the storm passes. It solves the day of the storm and creates a small problem for months afterward.

! More fuel is not the same as more ready

A modest, rotated supply that starts the generator on the first pull beats a garage full of last-minute cans every time.

The fire code doesn't pause for a storm warning

It's tempting to think the rules loosen when the weather turns serious. They don't.

However much fuel your local fire code allows at a home is the same amount whether the sky is clear or a storm is bearing down. If you're ever tempted to buy well beyond your normal supply because a big storm is coming, that's precisely the moment to pause and think about where it would actually go.

Our guide on fuel storage and your local fire code walks through how to ask your fire department for the limit at your address. It's a quick call, and it's worth making before storm season, not during it.

✓ Ask before the season, not during the warning

Fire departments are far easier to reach, and far happier to answer this question, on a calm week than during an active storm response.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

How much you keep ready, and how far you'd have to go to get more, depends a lot on where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or a close-in suburb, a station is usually still reachable even as a storm approaches, and your outages tend to run shorter. That points toward a smaller, easier-to-manage reserve.

- A can or two of gasoline, topped off and rotated, covers most in-town storm outages.
- Stations tend to reopen sooner in town, so there's less reason to overbuy before the storm even arrives.
- Check any city or homeowners' association limits on how much fuel you may store, storm or no storm.
- City water usually keeps flowing, so drinking water storage is less urgent here than on a well.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, a station may be a real drive, and a widespread storm can knock out power for days rather than hours. On a well, that also means water stops. You'll reasonably plan for a bigger reserve.

- Plan for the longer outage a rural storm can bring, with a somewhat larger, still-rotated reserve.
- Store extra drinking water ahead of time, since a well pump depends on the generator running.
- A larger propane tank or a delivery relationship with a local dealer helps you ride out a longer stretch.
- Keep the larger supply stored well away from the house and ask your fire department about limits for your property.

★ Let's plan for the storms you actually see

Tell me how long your outages usually run and how far you are from a station, and I'll help you size a sensible storm reserve — not too little, not a hazard. Call (330) 200-8042.

If you do add a little extra, store it just as carefully

Even sensible extra fuel deserves the same care as your everyday supply — maybe more, given the rush.

If your realistic outage planning calls for a bit more fuel than usual, store every container exactly the way you would any other day: approved cans, labeled and dated, kept well away from the house and any flame. Our safe gasoline storage guide and our guide on where never to store fuel both apply just as much under storm stress as on a calm afternoon.

It's easy to let good habits slip when you're hurrying — setting a can down in the wrong corner just this once, or skipping the cap check because the wind is picking up. Those are exactly the moments to slow down instead.

! Stress is not an exception to safe storage

Every safe-storage habit in this guide set applies just as firmly the day before a storm as it does any other day. Rushing is a reason to be more careful, not less.

Do this a few days out, not the night before

Timing is most of what separates calm prep from a panic buy.

As soon as a storm shows up in the forecast, that's your cue to start this checklist — not when the warning gets serious, and not the evening before it arrives. A few days of lead time means stations are less crowded, you have time to fix a generator that won't start, and you're not making decisions in a rush.

If you keep a rotated supply, this whole process might take you twenty unhurried minutes. That's only true if you start early enough to be unhurried in the first place.

✓ Early is what makes it easy

The exact same checklist feels completely different done four days out versus four hours out. Give yourself the lead time.

A couple of quick checks beyond the fuel itself

While you're out there testing the generator, a couple of related items are worth a glance.

Check the oil level while the generator is off and cool, following your owner's manual. If you have a sense of how long your generator runs on a tank, this is also a good moment to think through your refuel timing for the outage ahead — our guide on planning your fuel and runtime covers that side in full.

- Check the oil level, off and cool, per your manual.
- Confirm you know roughly how long a tank lasts, so refueling during the outage is planned, not a scramble.
- Have your carbon monoxide alarms and a working flashlight or two ready alongside the fuel itself.

✓ A few minutes now, a calmer outage later

These small checks take only a few minutes and pair naturally with the test start you're already doing.

Common mistakes people make

A handful of avoidable habits account for most storm-prep trouble I see.

- **Waiting until the storm warning is already serious** to think about fuel at all.
- **Buying a large, last-minute stash** instead of topping off a rotated supply.
- **Never testing the generator** until the moment the power is already out.
- **Forgetting propane cylinders** because gasoline gets all the attention.
- **Skipping the carbon monoxide alarm check** in the rush of other preparations.

! Panic buying feels responsible and rarely is

A crowded station the day before a storm is a sign that a lot of people skipped the calm, early version of this checklist. Don't be one of them.

After the storm: rotate what's left

Good storm prep has a second half that's easy to forget once the power's back.

Once the outage is over, don't just set the leftover fuel back in the corner and forget it. Fold it back into your normal rotation — use the oldest fuel first, top off what you used, and let your supply settle back to its usual, modest size. Our guide on how much fuel to keep and how to rotate it covers the ongoing habit.

This is also a good moment to note anything that didn't go smoothly — a generator that was slow to start, an alarm with a weak battery — while it's fresh in your mind, rather than waiting for the next storm to rediscover the same problem.

✓ Close the loop

The households who stay effortlessly ready are the ones who rotate back to normal after the storm, not just the ones who prep well before it.

Questions worth asking

Whether you're asking a dealer, a fire official, or me, these get you real answers.

Q: How far ahead of a storm should I start getting ready?

As soon as it appears in the forecast — ideally a few days out. That gives you time to fix a generator that won't start and avoids the crowded, last-minute rush.

Q: Is it okay to buy a little extra fuel before a big storm?

A modest top-up is sensible. A large last-minute stash is a fire risk, may exceed your local fire code, and is mostly fuel you won't be able to rotate afterward.

Q: Do I really need to test the generator before every storm?

Yes — it's the single most valuable step. A generator that struggles to start is far easier to fix a few days ahead than during the outage itself.

Q: What's different about storm prep on a well?

Store some drinking water ahead of time, since a well pump depends on the generator running. City water usually keeps flowing without one.

✓ There's no silly question

Storm prep can feel rushed even when you start early. Ask until you're confident — that's exactly how you stay calm when the weather turns.

A simple storm-prep checklist

Walk through this as soon as a storm shows up in the forecast.

- ☐ I started this checklist as soon as the storm appeared in the forecast, not the night before.
- ☐ I ran the generator outdoors and confirmed it starts and runs well.
- ☐ My gasoline cans are topped off, labeled, and dated.
- ☐ My propane cylinders are full, or refilled, and free of damage.
- ☐ I've stored some drinking water if I'm on a well.
- ☐ My carbon monoxide alarms are tested and have good batteries.
- ☐ I have not bought more fuel than I can store safely and rotate afterward.

★ I'll happily walk through it with you

If you'd like a second set of eyes on your storm-readiness before the season gets going, that's a quick, worthwhile visit. (330) 200-8042.

Fire and vapor safety, especially under pressure

A storm adds urgency, but it doesn't change a single one of the fire-safety basics.

Gasoline vapor is just as flammable the day before a storm as any other day, and a rushed household is, if anything, more likely to leave a cap loose or set a can down somewhere it shouldn't be. Slow down for the handful of seconds each safety habit actually takes.

The same goes for the generator itself once the outage begins: refuel only when it's off and cool, and keep it running outdoors, well away from the house, exactly as our carbon monoxide guide and our refueling off and cool guide describe.

! Urgency is not an excuse to skip a step

Every fire and carbon monoxide habit in this guide set holds just as firmly during a storm as it does on a quiet afternoon. If anything, hold it more firmly.

Common Questions

The storm-prep questions I hear most often, answered plainly.

Q: How much extra fuel should I buy before a storm?

Little to none, if your supply is already rotated — just top it off. Check your local fire code before storing more than your usual modest supply, storm or not.

Q: What if my generator won't start when I test it before the storm?

That's valuable news while there's still time to act on it. Call me or a qualified technician right away rather than waiting for the outage to find out.

Q: Should I fill my car's tank before a storm too?

That's a reasonable, separate habit many people keep, and it doesn't compete with fuel storage rules the way a gas can does — just don't let it replace having your generator's own supply ready.

Q: Is it safe to keep a bigger propane reserve for storm season?

Propane's long shelf life makes a somewhat larger reserve reasonable, but the same fire-code and storage-location rules still apply. Ask your dealer or fire department if you're unsure.

★ 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 before the next storm rolls in.

How this fits with the rest

Calm storm prep is really just your everyday habits, done a few days early — here's how the pieces connect.

This guide leaned heavily on habits covered elsewhere: our guide on how much fuel to keep and how to rotate it is what makes storm prep quick in the first place, and our guide on planning your fuel and runtime helps you think through the outage itself once the storm arrives.

If you're ever unsure how much you're allowed to store, our guide on fuel storage and your local fire code walks through how to ask, and our carbon monoxide guide covers the alarms and outdoor-running habits that matter even more once the generator is working overtime.

★ 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 help you get genuinely ready before the next storm.

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 getting fuel ready for a storm without hoarding 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

Calm Storm Prep vs. Panic Buying

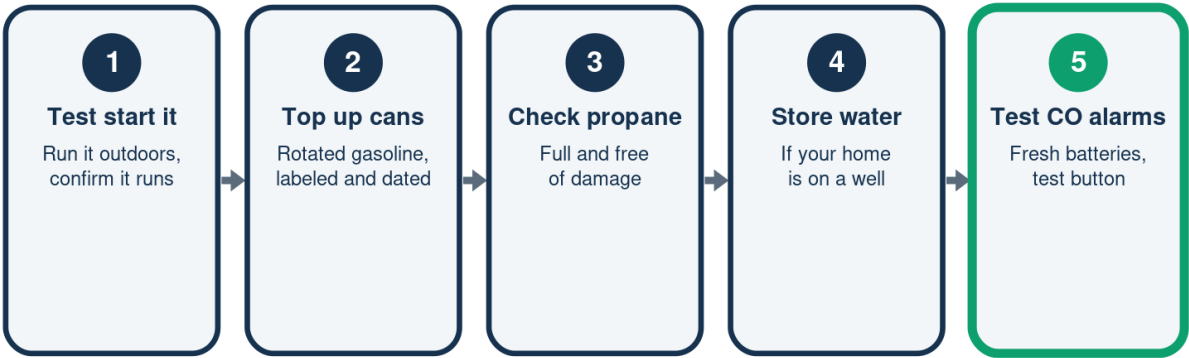
Same goal, two very different pictures

	Calm prep	Panic buying
Timing	Days ahead	Night before
Fire load	Stays modest	Spikes suddenly
Rotation after	Easy	Mostly stale
Stress level	Low	High

The best prep looks almost boring -- and that's the point.

Five Steps Before the Storm

Do these a few days ahead, not the night before



Do all five a few days ahead -- not the night the storm arrives.

Town vs. Rural Storm Prep

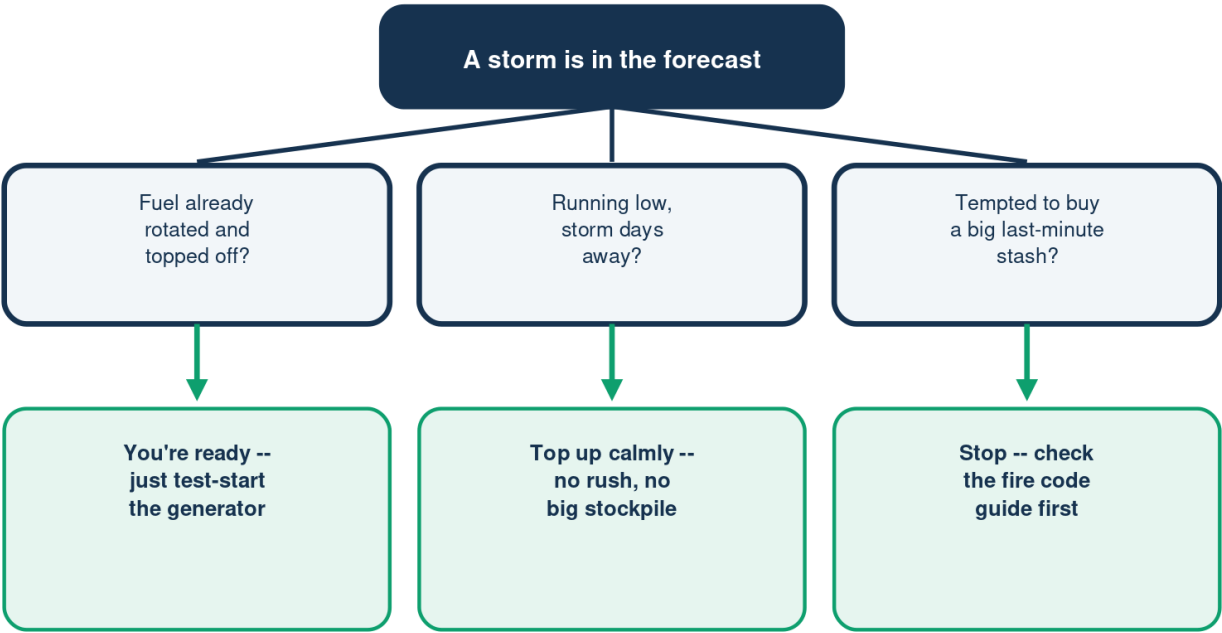
Same steps, different scale

	Town/suburb	Rural/well
Reserve size	Smaller	Larger
Station distance	Short drive	Real drive
Water plan	City water	Store water
Outage length	Often shorter	Can run longer

Where you live changes the scale, never the safety rules.

Should You Buy More Fuel Right Now?

A quick gut-check before a storm



A modest, rotated supply beats a big, forgotten one every single time.

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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