



An Extended Guide · No. 1621

Where You Should Never Store Fuel

The spots to avoid, and
the safe ones to choose

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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. Gasoline vapor is heavier than air and can travel along the floor to a spark or flame clear across the room, and propane sinks and spreads the very same way — so the spot you choose matters every bit as much as the container.

Let's talk about where fuel should never go

Every other guide in this set tells you how to store fuel well. This one is the flip side: the handful of spots that are genuinely dangerous no matter how good your can or cylinder is, and the safe alternatives that take their place.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30-plus years of helping folks around their homes, I've found that most fuel trouble traces back to a good container in a bad spot — not a bad container. Location is the one decision tidiness can't fix.

The list of places to avoid is short and firm, and once you know it, picking a safe spot instead is genuinely simple. No special equipment, just a little thought about distance and airflow.

★ There's no silly question here

If you're ever unsure whether your storage spot is a safe one, 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, you'll always know a safe spot from a dangerous one.

- ❑ Never inside the house, a basement, or any living space — not even for a day.
- ❑ Never near the water heater, furnace, stove, or any pilot light, spark, or ignition source.
- ❑ Never right next to a generator that's running or still hot.
- ❑ Never sealed up in a hot car or a closed trunk for long.
- ❑ Propane never lives indoors, and never in an attached garage.
- ❑ The safe spot: a detached, ventilated shed, or the far corner of a garage, clear of ignition, sun, traffic, kids, and pets.

✓ Knowing why makes it stick

This guide doesn't just hand you a list — it explains why each spot is dangerous, so the rule makes sense instead of feeling arbitrary.

Never inside the house, a basement, or any living space

This is the firmest rule in this whole guide, so let's start here.

Fuel of any kind — gasoline, propane, or diesel — does not belong anywhere under the same roof as where people sleep, eat, or spend their time. That includes a closet, a spare room, a basement, or tucked under a stairway. It feels convenient in the moment and it's never worth the risk.

- No closets, utility rooms, or storage nooks inside the house.
- No basements, even a dry, finished one.
- No attics — heat and poor airflow make them worse, not better.
- No attached garage, for propane specifically (more on that shortly).

! This one has no exceptions

There is no fuel, no amount, and no container good enough to make indoor storage acceptable. If fuel is inside your living space right now, moving it today is worth the trip.

Never near a flame, spark, or pilot light

This is the rule people break by accident, not on purpose — because a pilot light is easy to forget about.

A water heater, a furnace, and a gas stove or range all commonly run a small standing pilot light, or a spark igniter that fires every time they cycle on. Either one is exactly the kind of ignition source that turns stray fuel vapor into a fire. A fuel container sitting nearby, even a few steps away, is too close.

- Water heaters and furnaces, especially older gas models with a standing pilot.
- Gas ranges and ovens, and any appliance with a spark igniter.
- Fireplaces, wood stoves, and space heaters.
- Workshop equipment that sparks, like grinders or welding gear.

! The garage water heater is the classic trap

A huge number of garages have a water heater or furnace tucked in the corner. If yours does, that corner is exactly where fuel should never sit — choose the opposite side, or a detached spot instead.

Why vapor travels farther than you'd think

Understanding the why makes every rule in this guide make sense.

Gasoline gives off vapor even from a capped container, and that vapor is heavier than air. Instead of rising and dispersing the way smoke does, it sinks and creeps along the floor, quietly spreading toward the lowest point in the room — which might be right where a pilot light sits.

That's the whole reason distance matters more than most people expect. A container doesn't have to be right next to a flame to be dangerous — the vapor can travel the distance for it, unseen and unsmelled until it's too late.

✓ Our safe gasoline storage guide covers the container side

This guide is about location. For the container itself — the can, the cap, the size you can actually lift — our safe gasoline storage guide covers that in full.

Propane behaves the same way — and then some

If you store propane, this page matters just as much as the gasoline pages.

Propane is also heavier than air, so if it ever escapes a cylinder or tank, it sinks and pools low — along the floor, in a basement corner, or in a crawl space — rather than drifting harmlessly away. That's precisely why propane cylinders live outdoors, full stop, and never in an attached garage.

An attached garage might feel like a reasonable middle ground between outdoors and indoors, but it shares air with your house through the same walls, doors, and vents. Treat it like the indoors it's attached to.

! Propane: never indoors, never in an attached garage

This rule holds for a full cylinder, a partly used one, and one that reads empty — an empty cylinder still has some propane and vapor left inside. Our propane cylinder storage guide covers the full set of everyday habits.

Keep fuel away from a generator that's running or still hot

A working generator is its own ignition and heat source, and stored fuel has no business being close to it.

A running generator gets hot, vibrates, and throws exhaust — three things that don't mix well with a fuel container sitting nearby. Refueling should only ever happen once the engine is off and has had time to cool, which our guide on refueling only when it's off and cool covers in full.

The same logic applies to where you store fuel day to day: not propped against the generator's housing, not stacked next to where it runs during an outage. Give it its own space, well away from the machine entirely.

! Hot engine plus fuel is a bad combination

A spill on a hot engine can ignite instantly. Our guide on static and fire safety when refueling covers the habits that prevent exactly this — it's worth reading alongside this one.

Don't let fuel bake in a hot car or a closed trunk

This one surprises people, because a trunk feels like a normal place to keep things.

A closed vehicle sitting in the sun gets far hotter inside than the air outside, and that heat does two unhelpful things to stored fuel: it builds pressure inside a sealed container, and it speeds up the fuel's natural breakdown. Neither is what you want from fuel you're hoping to rely on later.

A quick errand with a can secured upright in the vehicle is a different matter — our guide on transporting fuel safely covers doing that part well. The issue here is fuel left to sit, sealed up, for hours or days at a time.

✓ A hot car is a storage spot, not a transport step

If a fuel can has been riding around in your trunk for more than a quick errand, it's time to move it to a proper storage spot instead.

So where should it go? Two good answers

Once you know what to avoid, the safe choices are refreshingly simple.

A detached shed is the ideal home for stored fuel — it's away from the house entirely, so nothing indoors is ever at risk, and it's easy to keep clear of ignition sources because there typically aren't any out there to begin with.

If a detached shed isn't an option, the far corner of a garage can work well, as long as it's genuinely clear of the water heater, furnace, or any pilot light, and out of the main path where it could be knocked into.

✓ Diesel follows the very same rules

Everything in this guide applies just as much to diesel as it does to gasoline. Our diesel storage and winter gelling guide covers diesel's own particular habits around water and cold.

What makes a spot genuinely safe

Beyond just avoiding the obvious dangers, a few finishing touches make a spot truly good.

- Ventilated, so any stray vapor has somewhere to go rather than building up.
- Out of direct summer sun, which helps keep both the container and its contents cooler.
- Off the main path of foot or vehicle traffic, so it can't be knocked over or driven into.
- Out of reach of curious kids and pets, ideally somewhere that latches.

★ I'm glad to walk your space with you

If you're picturing your garage or shed right now and aren't sure it checks every box, that's an easy thing to look at together. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Where you live changes how much room you have to work with, but never which spots are off-limits.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or a close-in suburb, an attached garage is common and space is often tight, which makes the far-corner rule especially important.

- Pick the corner of the garage farthest from the water heater, furnace, and the door into the house.
- Check whether your city or homeowners' association has rules about where fuel or propane may be kept.
- A tight lot still has room for a small, simple outdoor enclosure for a propane cylinder.
- Keep the spot away from the main path between the car and the house.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, there's usually more room, and more outbuildings to be thoughtful about — a barn or workshop can hide ignition sources of its own.

- A detached barn or shed away from the house is often the best spot of all.
- Keep fuel well clear of a workshop bench, welding area, or any equipment with a pilot light or spark.
- More storage room doesn't loosen the ignition-distance rules — keep the same clearance no matter the size of the space.
- Ask your local fire department about any rules for a larger rural property before you settle on a spot.

★ Not sure your spot passes the test?

Describe your garage, shed, or barn to me, and I'll help you figure out the safest corner for it. Call (330) 200-8042.

If an attached garage is your only option

Plenty of homes only have an attached garage, so let's make the best of it honestly.

If a detached shed isn't realistic for you, an attached garage can still work for gasoline and diesel, as long as you're genuinely strict about the far-corner rule: well clear of the water heater, furnace, and the door into the house, and off the path you walk every day.

Propane cylinders are the one exception worth repeating — they belong outdoors, not in the attached garage at all, however far the corner. A small outdoor enclosure solves this cleanly even on a tight lot.

! Convenience is where this rule usually breaks

The corner nearest the door in from the garage is the most convenient spot to set a can down — and often the closest to the house. Choose the least convenient corner instead.

Common mistakes people make

A handful of avoidable habits account for most bad-location trouble.

- **Tucking a can just inside the door** for convenience, right next to the water heater it shares a wall with.
- **Bringing a propane cylinder inside** for a few days because it's 'basically empty.'
- **Setting fuel down next to the generator** while it's running, instead of well away from it.
- **Leaving a can in a hot trunk** for days after a fill-up.
- **Assuming a finished basement is fine** because it feels like just another room.

! Each of these feels harmless in the moment

None of these mistakes looks dangerous day to day, which is exactly what makes them common. The danger shows up only once, and that's one time too many.

Even a detached shed has its own rules

A detached shed solves the biggest problem — distance from the house — but it isn't automatically perfect.

Inside the shed itself, keep fuel away from anything that could spark or heat up: a space heater, a battery charger, power tools, or a lawn mower engine that's just been running. A shed is safer than the house, but it isn't a free pass to ignore ignition sources entirely.

Ventilation matters here too — a small gap or vent lets any stray vapor disperse rather than collect. A shed that's sealed up tight loses some of the safety advantage that being detached was supposed to give you.

✓ Detached is a great start, not the whole answer

Treat the inside of your shed with the same care you'd give a corner of the garage — distance from the house is only one part of the picture.

Keeping people and pets safe around the spot you choose

Wherever fuel ends up, it's worth thinking about who else might find it.

Choose a spot where curious kids and pets can't easily reach or knock over a container — up off the floor's main path, and ideally somewhere that latches or is otherwise hard for small hands to get into.

This matters doubly for a detached shed, which sometimes becomes a favorite hiding spot for kids at play. A latch or simple lock is a small, worthwhile habit.

! A stable, latched spot protects everyone

A container that's easy to knock over is a spill waiting to happen, and a spot that's easy for a child to wander into is a risk you don't need. A little latch hardware covers both.

A quick word on the rules where you live

How much you can store, and in some cases exactly where, is ultimately a question for your local fire code — not a guess from me.

Local fire codes sometimes speak directly to where fuel may be stored on a property, in addition to how much. Rather than assume, a quick call to your local fire department confirms the specifics for your address.

This matters most if you're setting up a new shed or reworking your garage with storage in mind. Our guide on fuel storage and your local fire code walks through how to ask and what these rules are usually about.

✓ Ask before you build or rearrange

It's much easier to plan a compliant spot from the start than to move things around later.

Questions worth asking

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

Q: Can I store gasoline in my attached garage at all?

Yes, in the far corner, well clear of the water heater, furnace, and any pilot light or spark source, and off the main traffic path. A detached shed is safer still.

Q: Is it really true an 'empty' propane cylinder still matters?

Yes — a cylinder that reads empty still holds some propane and vapor. Store it outdoors just like a full one, never indoors or in an attached garage.

Q: How far is far enough from a generator?

Far enough that heat, vibration, and exhaust from a running unit never reach stored fuel. Store fuel in its own spot, separate from where the generator runs, and refuel only once it's off and cool.

Q: Does this apply to diesel too?

Yes — the same never-store list applies to diesel as much as gasoline. Our diesel storage and winter gelling guide covers diesel's own additional habits around water and cold.

✓ There's no silly question

Where fuel should live can feel like common sense until you're standing in your own garage trying to decide. Ask until you're confident — that's exactly how you stay safe.

A simple where-should-this-go checklist

Walk through this on a calm afternoon, not while you're holding a full can.

- ☐ Nothing is stored inside the house, a basement, or any living space.
- ☐ Nothing sits near a water heater, furnace, stove, or any pilot light.
- ☐ Propane cylinders live outdoors only, never in an attached garage.
- ☐ Fuel is never stored right next to where the generator runs.
- ☐ No fuel is sitting sealed in a hot car or closed trunk.
- ☐ The spot is ventilated, shaded, off the traffic path, and out of reach of kids and pets.

★ I'll happily check your spot with you

If you'd like a second set of eyes on where your fuel lives, that's a quick, worthwhile visit. (330) 200-8042.

Fire and vapor safety, worth repeating

This guide has one idea running through it, and it's worth saying plainly one more time.

Fuel vapor doesn't stay where you put it. It spreads, sinks, and finds the nearest ignition source it can, often well before you'd ever smell it. That single fact is the reason behind every rule on every page of this guide.

Choosing the right spot is one of the cheapest, easiest safety decisions you'll ever make around your home — it costs nothing but a little thought, and it removes almost all of the risk that a good container alone can't fix.

! When in doubt, choose more distance

If you're ever torn between two spots, pick the one that's farther from the house, farther from any flame, and farther from where people and pets spend their time.

Common Questions

The location questions I hear most often, answered plainly.

Q: What's the single worst place to store gasoline?

Inside the house or basement, especially anywhere near a water heater or furnace's pilot light. Vapor can travel along the floor to reach it.

Q: Can I keep a propane cylinder in my garage if the door stays open?

Not as a regular habit. An open door doesn't reliably disperse a leak the way genuinely being outdoors does. Store cylinders outdoors, full stop.

Q: Is a shed always safer than a garage?

A detached shed is generally safer because it's away from the house entirely. Either can work well as long as it's ventilated, clear of ignition sources, and away from foot traffic.

Q: Why can't I just leave a can in the trunk between uses?

Heat inside a closed vehicle builds pressure and speeds up fuel breakdown. A quick errand is fine; long-term storage in a hot trunk is not.

★ 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 your setup, I'll come take a look.

How this fits with the rest

Choosing the right spot is one piece of fuel safety — here's how the pieces connect.

This guide focused on where fuel should never go, and the safe alternatives that take its place. For the container itself, see our safe gasoline storage guide; for propane specifically, our propane cylinder storage guide covers the everyday habits in full.

For the moment you're actually refueling, our guide on static and fire safety when refueling is the natural next read, and if your local fire code is on your mind, our guide on fuel storage and your local fire code walks through how to ask. Diesel owners will find the same never-store list applies, alongside diesel's own habits in our diesel storage guide.

★ 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'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 figuring out where fuel should never go 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

Where Fuel Should Never Go

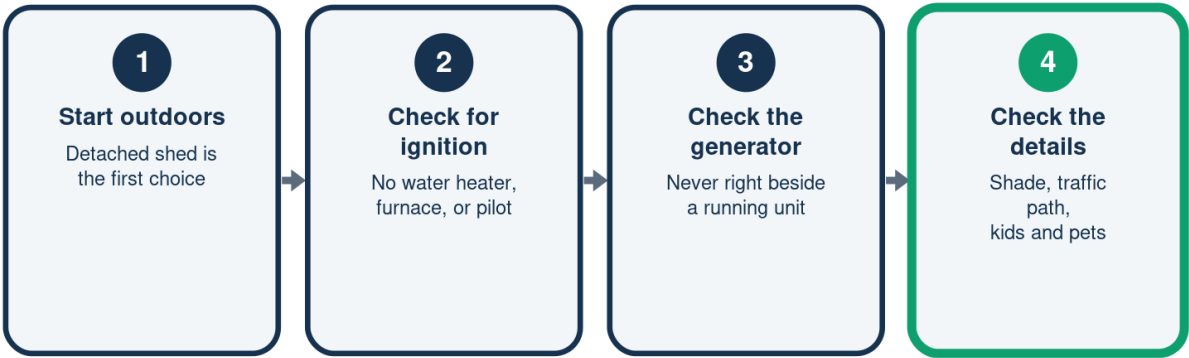
The single most important storage decision

	Do this	Never this
Location	Detached shed	Inside the house
Near heat	Far from any flame	By the water heater
Generator	Well away, outdoors	Right next to it
In the car	Ventilated space	Sealed hot trunk

If it's not one of these, it's not a safe fuel spot.

Choosing a Safe Spot in Four Checks

A quick way to rule out the bad spots



Four quick checks and you've found a genuinely safe spot.

Gasoline Vapor and Propane: Both Sink and Spread

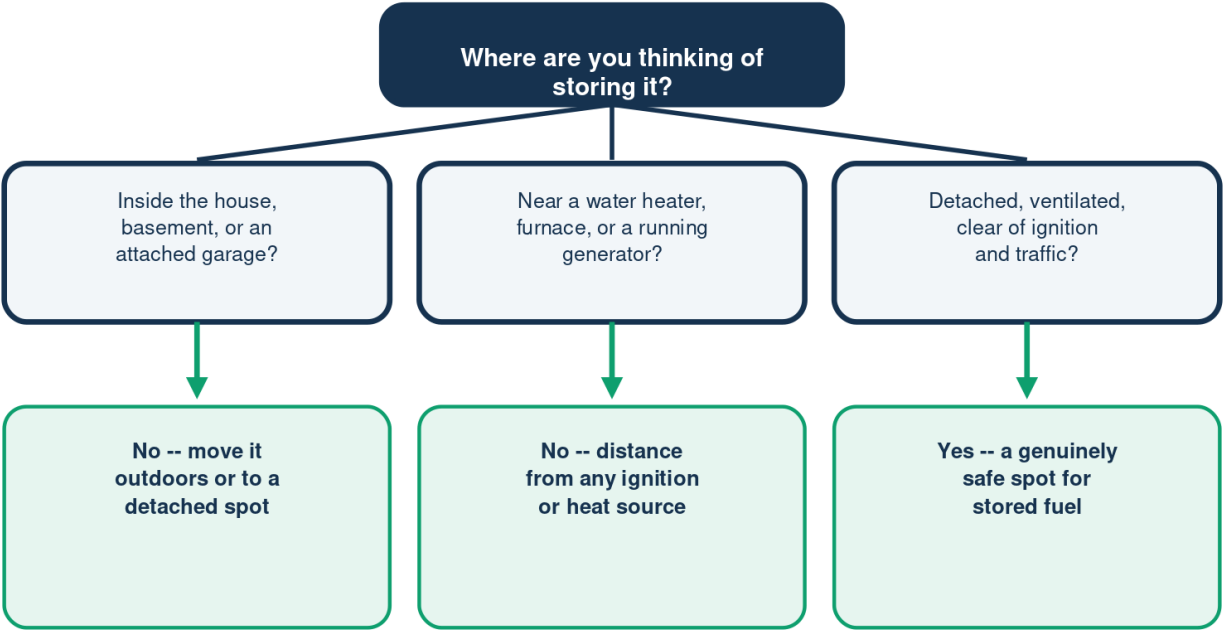
Two fuels, the same low-lying danger

	Gasoline vapor	Propane
Weight vs. air	Heavier	Heavier
Tends to	Crawl along floor	Sink, pool low
Indoors	Never	Never
Attached garage	Far corner only	Never at all

Both sink low and gather near the floor -- respect them equally.

Is This Spot Safe for Fuel?

A quick gut-check before you decide



When in doubt, treat propane and gasoline vapor exactly the same way.

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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