



An Extended Guide · No. 1256

Keeping the Fridge & Freezer Going

Saving your food in an outage

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Hello, and welcome

When a storm knocks the power out, the first worry for most folks isn't the television or the lights — it's the food in the refrigerator and the freezer, and whether it's all about to go to waste. The good news is that saving it is far easier than you might fear, and this guide walks you through it in plain English.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent more than 30 years helping folks get comfortable with their technology — patiently, in plain language, and at their own pace. Think of this guide as me sitting at your kitchen table, walking through it with you one step at a time.

We'll cover what your fridge and freezer actually need from a generator, how long your food really stays safe (there's a simple clock, and it's friendlier than you'd guess), the one golden rule that saves more food than anything else, and a clever way to run the generator only part of the time and still keep everything cold. Whether you've got a single kitchen refrigerator in town or a row of chest freezers full of the garden and a side of beef out in the country, there's a plan here for you.

You do not have to read this all at once, and you certainly don't have to memorize it. Skip to whatever you need, keep it handy, and know that a real person is only a phone call away.

★ How to use this guide

Each page stands on its own. Read one, take what's useful, and come back for the next when you're ready. If a step ever feels fuzzy, that's on my writing — not on you — and you can always call me at (330) 200-8042.

What your fridge and freezer actually need

Here's a reassuring place to begin: keeping a refrigerator and a freezer running is one of the easiest, most sensible jobs a small generator will ever do for you.

While a refrigerator is just humming along, it sips a surprisingly modest amount of power — often only a few hundred watts, give or take, no more than a bright lamp and a fan together. A freezer is much the same. So the steady, everyday job of keeping your food cold is light work, even for one of the small, quiet inverter units.

There's one wrinkle worth knowing, and it's the whole reason people sometimes get caught out. Both a fridge and a freezer are run by a **compressor** — a motor that switches on and off through the day to keep things cold. The instant that motor kicks on, it grabs a much bigger gulp of power for a second or two — often several times its steady running amount — before settling right back down. That brief **start-up surge** is the number your generator really has to be ready for.

The happy part is that a modest inverter generator takes this in stride, and its power is exactly the right kind for the job. The clean, steady wave an inverter unit makes is gentle on that compressor motor and on the delicate **control board** that runs a modern refrigerator — the little computer behind the temperature display and the ice maker. Rougher power from an old-fashioned generator can be hard on those sensitive parts over time; clean inverter power is not.

✓ A moment's care on start-up

If your generator has an eco or economy mode, flip it off for a moment right before the fridge or freezer kicks on, so the engine has its full muscle ready for that surge — then switch it back on. On a right-sized unit it's usually a non-event, but this little habit makes it seamless.

How long your food really stays safe

Before you do anything else, take a breath — you have more time than you think. Food-safety experts have measured this, and the numbers are friendlier than most folks fear.

According to food-safety experts, a **refrigerator that stays closed** will keep your food safely cold for about **four hours** after the power goes out. That's four hours before you even need to start worrying about the milk and the leftovers — plenty of time to get the generator out and running, or to move the most important things into a cooler.

A **freezer** holds out far longer, because everything inside is already frozen solid and helps keep the rest cold. Food-safety experts say a **full freezer** stays safely frozen for about **48 hours** — a full two days — if you keep the lid shut. A freezer that's only **half full** holds the cold for about **24 hours**, since there's less frozen food to help. That's a big clue we'll come back to: a full freezer is a better freezer.

Every one of those times comes with the same fine print, and it matters more than anything else on this page: they only hold true if you **keep the doors closed**. The moment you open a door, warm room air pours in, the cold pours out, and that friendly clock speeds up. We'll give the golden rule its own page next, because it saves more food than the generator does.

✓ Write down the time

The very moment the power goes out, jot down the time on a scrap of paper and stick it to the fridge. When you know exactly when the clock started, you never have to guess whether your food is still in the safe window.

The golden rule: keep the doors shut

If you remember only one thing from this whole guide, let it be this: keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed. It's the single most powerful thing you can do to save your food, and it costs nothing.

A closed fridge is like a good cooler — it holds its cold for hours. But each time the door swings open, all that carefully kept cold air spills out onto the kitchen floor and warm air rushes in to replace it. Do that a few times an hour, out of habit, and you can burn through your safe window long before the food would have spoiled on its own.

So the trick is to open the door with a plan. Before you reach for the handle, decide everything you need — the milk, the butter, tonight's dinner — and get it all in one quick trip, then shut the door and leave it be. Treat every opening as if it costs you something, because it does.

The freezer deserves even more discipline, and happily it's easier to leave alone. There's rarely a reason to open a freezer during a short outage at all. Left shut, a full one can coast for a couple of days. A thick coat of frost is your friend here — it's just more cold, stored up and waiting.

! Tape it shut if you have to

If there are children in the house, or anyone who opens the fridge out of boredom during a long outage, a loop of painter's tape across the door is a gentle, harmless reminder. It sounds silly until it saves your freezer full of food.

You don't have to run it around the clock

Here's the money-saver of the whole guide: you almost never need to run your generator nonstop to keep food cold. You run it a while, then let the cold coast.

Remember those food-safety numbers — hours and even days of cold with the doors shut. That same coasting works in your favor while the generator sits quiet. A refrigerator and freezer don't need a steady trickle of power all day; they need to be pulled down good and cold now and then, and they'll hold that cold on their own in between.

So the routine looks like this. **Run** the generator for a couple of hours, long enough for the fridge and freezer to cycle and get thoroughly cold. Then **shut it off** and save your fuel. Let the cold **coast** for several hours with the doors closed. When things start to warm back toward the safe limit, **fire it up again** and repeat. Run a while, coast, repeat — that's the whole rhythm.

This one habit pays off three ways. It stretches your fuel a long way, which matters enormously when a storm has closed the gas stations and you're rationing what's in the can. It's easier on the generator and quieter for you and your neighbors. And it means you're not tempted to leave a generator running overnight while everyone sleeps — which, as the safety page explains, you must never do.

✓ Let the thermometer be your timer

A couple of cheap thermometers, which we'll talk about soon, take all the guesswork out of cycling. When the freezer creeps up near its limit, it's time to run the generator again. No clock-watching required.

A full freezer is your friend

Of all the little tricks in this guide, this is the one that surprises people most: a freezer packed full keeps your food safe roughly twice as long as one that's half empty.

The reason is simple. Every bit of frozen food is a little block of stored cold, and all those blocks help keep each other frozen. A full freezer is a solid mass of cold that gives up its chill slowly — about two days' worth. A half-empty freezer has big pockets of air that warm up quickly, so it only holds the safe cold for about a day.

You don't need to run out and buy two days of groceries to fill it, though. The easy fix is **water**. Fill clean jugs or bottles about three-quarters full — leaving room for the water to expand as it freezes — and tuck them into the empty spaces in your freezer. Frozen solid, they turn all that dead air into stored cold.

Those frozen jugs earn their keep three times over. They make your freezer coast longer, they can be moved into the refrigerator during an outage to help keep it cold, and as they melt you have clean drinking water on hand — a real comfort if you're on a well and the water has stopped.

✓ Do this before storm season

Freeze a few jugs of water now and leave them in the freezer year-round. They cost nothing, they make the freezer a touch more efficient every day, and they're ready the moment a storm is in the forecast.

Which one comes first?

If your generator is modest, or you simply want to be smart about it, it helps to know which appliance deserves priority when you can't give everything your full attention at once.

Start with good news: a small inverter generator can usually run a refrigerator and a freezer at the same time without breaking a sweat — their steady draws are light. So when the generator is on, run both and let them both get cold. The question of priority really matters for what you protect between runs, when you're cycling and coasting.

As a rule, the **freezer usually comes first**. It tends to hold the most food and the most value — a season of the garden, a side of beef, a fall's worth of venison — and, kept full and closed, it coasts the longest all on its own. Letting a full freezer thaw is the costliest thing that can happen in an outage, so that's the cold you guard most carefully.

The **refrigerator** is the opposite kind of worry: its food is less valuable to replace, but it spoils faster, on that four-hour clock. The sensible balance is to top the fridge back up every time you run the generator, and, if the outage drags on, move its most perishable items — and any medicine that needs to stay cold — into a cooler with ice, so you're not fussing over the fridge between runs.

★ Freezer holds the stakes, fridge holds the clock

That's the whole idea in one line. Guard the freezer's cold because it holds the most to lose; watch the fridge's clock because its food turns the fastest. Do both and you'll come through an outage with your food and your peace of mind intact.

Run a good cord straight to the appliance

With the generator safely outside, you need a way to get its power to the kitchen — and the humble extension cord is where a lot of good plans quietly go wrong.

The rule is to run **one good, heavy-duty outdoor extension cord** straight from the generator to the appliance. Heavy-duty means a thick cord rated for the job — the gauge number is smaller for thicker wire — and clearly marked for outdoor use. A thin, light-duty cord asked to carry a refrigerator can overheat, sag the power, and make the fridge work harder than it should.

Keep the run as **short** as you sensibly can, and resist the temptation to chain two or three little cords together to reach — each connection is a weak point, and the longer and thinner the path, the more power is lost along the way. One properly sized cord beats a daisy chain of cheap ones every time.

Bring the cord in through a cracked window or door — a flat, low-profile cord made for the purpose, or a proper generator inlet, makes this tidy. And remember the safety page: the generator itself stays **outside, at least 20 feet from the house**, no matter how tempting the garage looks in the rain.

! Never back-feed the house

Don't try to power the whole kitchen by plugging a generator into a wall outlet or a dryer plug — that's dangerous, against code, and it can injure a lineman working to restore your power. Running cords straight to your appliances is the safe way. To power built-in circuits, an electrician installs a proper transfer switch, which is its own guide.

Don't ask it to do too much at once

A generator has only so much to give, and overloading it is the most common way folks trip themselves up. The fix is easy once you understand it.

For keeping food cold, the load is light. A refrigerator plus a few small things — some lights, phones charging, the internet router, maybe a small TV — is usually a comfortable load for even a small inverter unit. You're not asking much of it, and it'll happily oblige.

The thing to mind is that **start-up surge** again. When the fridge's compressor kicks on, it briefly demands several times its running power. If the generator is already loaded right up to its limit with other things, that surge can push it over the edge — you'll see the lights dim, an overload light come on, or hear the engine bog down.

The cure is to leave a little **headroom** and to start big things **one at a time**. Get the refrigerator running first and let it settle, then plug in the freezer, then the smaller odds and ends. Spacing out the motor starts by even a few seconds keeps everything smooth. If you're running both a fridge and a freezer, know that each has its own surge — usually still no trouble for a sensibly sized unit, but a good reason not to pile on the extras.

✓ If it complains, shed a load

If the generator's overload light comes on or it starts to strain, unplug something small right away — a space heater or a kettle is usually the culprit, not the fridge. Give it room and it will run happily for days.

A few-dollar thermometer earns its keep

The cheapest, smartest thing you can add to your outage kit isn't a gadget or a bigger generator — it's a simple appliance thermometer, and it takes all the guessing out of keeping food safe.

For only a few dollars, you can buy a small thermometer made to sit inside a refrigerator or freezer. Put one in each. From then on, you're never guessing whether the food is cold enough — you just glance at the number. That's worth far more than its tiny price when your freezer is full of food you can't easily replace.

The number that matters most is **40°F**. Food-safety experts treat 40°F as the line for refrigerated food: at or below it, your food is in the safe zone; above it for too long, and the risky items are no longer safe to eat. Your freezer should sit far colder, right around 0°F, with the food frozen hard.

A thermometer also makes cycling the generator effortless. Instead of watching the clock, you watch the freezer's temperature. When it starts climbing toward that limit, you know it's time to run the generator again — and when everything is back down cold, you can shut it off with confidence.

✓ A reading without opening the door

For a prized chest freezer, there are inexpensive thermometers with a wireless display you keep on the counter, so you can check the temperature without ever lifting the lid. For the food it protects, that's money very well spent.

When in doubt, throw it out

Sometimes an outage runs long, or you were away when the power failed, and you simply aren't sure whether the food is still good. Food-safety experts have a rule for exactly that moment, and it's worth taking to heart.

The rule is: **when in doubt, throw it out**. If refrigerated food — meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, soft cheeses, leftovers, anything that can spoil — has sat above **40°F** for more than about two hours, it's safest to let it go. It feels wasteful, and it is a shame, but a bout of food poisoning costs far more than a trip to the grocery store.

Please don't try to judge by taste or smell. Some of the bacteria that make people sick leave no odor, no strange color, and no off taste at all. A carton of milk or a package of chicken can look and smell perfectly fine and still be unsafe. Never taste food to check it.

Not everything has to go. Frozen food that **still has ice crystals** or is at 40°F or below can be safely refrozen, though it may lose a little quality. And plenty of things ride out an outage just fine — butter, hard and processed cheeses, most condiments, opened jars of jam and pickles, fresh whole fruits and vegetables. When you're unsure about a particular item, though, the rule stands: out it goes.

! Your health is worth more than a freezer of food

I know how much a full freezer means, especially when it holds a garden's work or a side of beef. But no amount of food is worth a hospital trip. When something is truly in doubt, let it go — and call me if you'd like a hand thinking through what's safe and what is not.

If you live in town: city and suburb

Most of my customers here in town — in Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro, and Aurora — have a pretty simple setup to protect: the kitchen refrigerator, and often a second freezer, an upright or a chest, out in the garage or basement. That's a comfortable job for a small, quiet generator.

For a typical town home, a small inverter unit will keep the kitchen fridge and a garage freezer both running, with room left over for some lights, the phones, and the internet. Their steady draw is light; it's only those brief compressor surges to keep in mind, and a sensibly sized unit handles them without fuss.

The one that catches people is the **garage freezer**. Out of sight, it's easy to forget — until you remember it's holding a summer's worth of berries, or the bulk meat you bought on sale. Run a cord out to it just as you do the kitchen fridge, and give it the same priority you would any freezer full of food.

Cycling the generator is a real pleasure in town. A quiet inverter unit run a few hours at a time, in eco mode, is kind to neighbors close by — and because you're on city water, you don't have a well pump forcing you to a bigger, louder machine. You can keep it small, quiet, and neighborly.

! Apartments and condos: a different plan

If you live in an apartment or condo with no safe outdoor spot well away from windows, a fuel generator usually isn't practical, and running one on a balcony or in a garage is dangerous. For keeping a few essentials and some food cold, a quiet battery power station, a good cooler with ice, or a spot in a neighbor's freezer may be the better plan. I'm glad to help you sort out which.

If you're in the country on a well

Out in the townships — Atwater, Rootstown, Deerfield, and Palmyra — the freezer situation is a different animal altogether. Plenty of my country customers have not one freezer but several: chest freezers in the barn or basement holding the garden harvest, half a beef, a deer or two from the fall. That's a lot of food, and a lot of work, on the line.

When the stakes are that high, the plan starts with **size**. Several chest freezers running at once, each with its own start-up surge, can be more than one of the little suitcase generators can comfortably handle. This is a case for stepping up to a larger unit with the muscle to run them all — and for deciding, ahead of time, which freezer comes first if you ever have to choose. The deep freezers of meat usually win: they hold the most value and, kept full and closed, they coast the longest.

Keep every freezer as full as you sensibly can — pack the gaps with jugs of water — and put a thermometer in the most valuable one so you always know where you stand. Then cycle the generator as usual: run it a few hours to pull everything down hard and cold, shut it off, and let all that frozen food coast.

One more country reality deserves a word here. Many of these same homes are on a private well, so when the power quits, the water quits too — and folks naturally hope the same generator can cover the well pump along with the freezers.

! The honest truth about well pumps

Most home well pumps run on 240 volts, and the small, quiet inverter generators most folks picture put out only 120 volts — so they cannot run the pump at all. For a well you need a larger inverter unit with a 120/240-volt outlet, sized to your pump, and a proper way to connect it. Pairing two little units together does not fix this — two 120-volt units still only make 120 volts. I'll help you get the right size, and bring in a licensed electrician for the hookup.

✓ A whole-place plan is worth a phone call

Between the freezers, the well pump, and the everyday essentials, a country home in a long outage has a lot to juggle. That's exactly the kind of thing I love to help plan out — what to run, in what order, and how big a generator it takes. Bring me your list of freezers and we'll size it together: (330) 200-8042.

The safety talk: carbon monoxide

To save your food you'll likely run this generator on and off for a day or two, firing it up and shutting it down several times — which makes this the most important page in the guide. Every fuel-burning generator shares one rule that never bends.

Every generator that burns gasoline or propane makes carbon monoxide, or "CO" — a gas you cannot see or smell. It is the one real danger with a generator, and it is completely avoidable. More people are hurt by running a generator in the wrong place than by anything else, so please read this page twice.

Outside only — no exceptions

Never run a generator indoors, and that includes the garage, the basement, a shed, a carport, or a covered porch — even with the door up or a window open. CO pools and seeps into the house. The only safe place is outdoors, in the open air.

At least 20 feet away, exhaust pointed away

Set the generator at least 20 feet from the house, and turn it so the exhaust blows **away** from any door, window, or vent. Don't tuck it against the wall to hide it or keep it dry — give it room to breathe and let the fumes drift off.

Alarms are your safety net

Put working carbon-monoxide alarms on every level of your home and near the bedrooms, and use ones with a battery backup so they work when the power is out. Test them now, before storm season, not during it.

Your calm game plan when the power goes

When the lights go out, a little order keeps you from panicking and keeps your food safe. Here's the whole plan on one page, in the order you'd actually do it.

- **1. Note the time.** Write down when the power went out and stick it to the fridge. Your safe-food clock starts now.
- **2. Keep the doors shut.** Decide what you need before you open, and get it in one trip. This saves more food than anything else you'll do.
- **3. Set up the generator outside.** At least 20 feet from the house, exhaust pointed away, with a heavy-duty cord run to the refrigerator and freezer.
- **4. Run a few hours, then cycle.** Let the fridge and freezer get good and cold, then shut the generator off and let the cold coast. Fire it back up when the thermometer climbs toward the limit.
- **5. Judge with the thermometer, not your gut.** Keep food at or below 40°F, and when something is truly in doubt, throw it out.

That's the entire routine. Most outages are over well within your safe window, and even a long one is manageable when you work the plan calmly instead of flinging the freezer open every hour to check.

! The one rule that matters most: fresh air

Because you'll be starting and stopping this generator throughout the outage, the one rule that never bends is worth repeating right here. A generator's engine gives off carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill before you know it's there. Three rules keep you safe: run it **outside only** (never in a garage, basement, shed, or breezeway, even with the door open); keep it **at least 20 feet from the house** with the exhaust pointed away from doors, windows, and vents; and put **working carbon-monoxide alarms** on every level and near where you sleep. If an alarm sounds or anyone feels dizzy or headachy, get to fresh air first, then call 911.

Standalone freezers of put-up food

The big chest and upright freezers that hold a family's put-up food deserve a page of their own, because they're both the biggest thing at stake in an outage and, happily, the best equipped to ride one out.

A standalone freezer is a coasting champion. It's heavily insulated, it's usually packed full of frozen food that holds its own cold, and a **chest** freezer has one more trick: because its lid is on top, the cold air — which sinks — stays put when you lift it, instead of spilling out the way it does from a front door. Kept full and closed, a good chest freezer can hold safely frozen food for about two days.

So the plan for a freezer full of value is straightforward. **Keep it full**, filling any gaps with jugs of water. **Put a thermometer inside** — ideally one with a wireless readout you can check without opening the lid. **Give it priority** when you cycle the generator, pulling it down hard and cold each run. And **leave it shut** the rest of the time; there's rarely any reason to open it during a short outage.

After a long outage, before you assume the worst, check it properly. Frozen food that still has ice crystals or is at 40°F or below is safe to refreeze, even if it has softened — you've very likely not lost a thing. It's only when the food has fully thawed and warmed past that line that the throw-it-out rule kicks in.

✓ The champion of coasting

If you can only protect one thing during an outage, a full chest freezer is often the easiest win — it holds the most food and needs the least babysitting. Keep it full, keep it closed, and it very nearly takes care of itself.

Your fridge-and-freezer questions, answered

The questions I hear most often when folks are trying to keep their food through an outage.

Q: How long can I keep the fridge closed before the food is at risk?

About four hours, food-safety experts say, as long as it stays shut. A full freezer holds for about two days, a half-full one about a day. Note the time the power went out so you always know where you stand.

Q: Can I really shut the generator off at night?

Yes — and you should. The cold coasts for hours with the doors closed, so you cycle the generator rather than run it nonstop. You must never run a generator overnight near the house while everyone sleeps anyway, because of carbon monoxide.

Q: My freezer is only half full. What should I do?

Fill the empty space with clean jugs of water, three-quarters full so they have room to expand as they freeze. A full freezer holds the safe cold about twice as long as a half-empty one.

Q: The power was out longer than I was home. Is the food okay?

Check a thermometer if you have one. Refrigerated food kept above 40°F for more than about two hours should go; frozen food with ice crystals can be refrozen. When in doubt, throw it out, and never taste to check.

Q: Do I need a big generator just for the fridge?

Not at all. A small, quiet inverter unit runs a refrigerator and a freezer with room to spare. You only step up to a larger unit if you're protecting several freezers at once or backing up a well pump.

Q: Can one generator run the fridge and the freezer together?

Usually yes. Their steady draw is light; just mind the start-up surges by starting them one at a time and leaving a little headroom. Cheap extras like a space heater are what overload a generator, not the fridge.

When the power comes back on

The lights flicker back, and there's one calm, five-minute job left: making sure everything in the fridge and freezer is still good before you trust it.

Start with your thermometers, if you set them out. Is the refrigerator at or below **40°F**? Does the freezer food still have **ice crystals**, or is it at 40°F or below? If so, you've very likely come through with everything safe. If the fridge drifted warmer than 40°F for more than a couple of hours, sort through it and let the risky items go.

Frozen food that partly thawed but still holds ice crystals can be **refrozen** safely. It may lose a bit of texture — a berry may go soft, a cut of meat may weep a little when it cooks — but it's safe to eat. If it will bother you not knowing, label those packages and use them first.

Then just let things settle. Give the refrigerator and freezer a little while to pull back down to their normal temperatures before you pile fresh groceries in, wipe up any melt, and toss anything you decided was questionable. A few unhurried minutes now is the surest way to avoid a stomachache later.

★ A quick check beats a stomachache

If you're ever staring into a freezer after a long outage and can't decide what's safe, that's a fine time to call me. We'll walk through it together — what to keep, what to refreeze, and what to let go — so you can trust your food again.

How I can help

Keeping your food safe through an outage is exactly the kind of down-to-earth, practical help I love giving folks around Portage County — no panic and no jargon, just a simple plan you can count on.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech right here in Portage County. I'm a tech-help person, not a power company and not a pushy salesman — I help folks pick the right gear, set it up, and feel confident using it. With generators, that means helping you choose a unit that fits your home and your budget, showing you how to run it safely, and getting your internet, TV, and devices happily back on once the power's flowing.

If protecting a row of freezers means wiring the generator into your home, or backing up a 240-volt well pump at the same time, that hookup is a licensed electrician's job — I'm not an electrician myself. I'll help you size the right unit, coordinate the electrician, and handle the rest, so you have one friendly point of contact for the whole project.

Three easy ways to get help

- **An in-home visit** — a flat \$99 first visit. I come to you, here in Portage County, and every visit is 30-day come-back-free.
- **Remote help** — a flat \$49 screen-share, up to two hours, for the things I can sort out without coming over (it's free for Support Plan members).
- **A Support Plan** — \$39 a month for folks who'd like me on call all year.

Coolers and ice: a backup to your backup

A generator is the heart of your plan, but a couple of coolers and some ice are the sensible backup — for the gap before the generator is running, and for the most important things in the fridge.

In the first hour of an outage, or any time you'd rather not open the refrigerator over and over, move your most perishable and important items into a cooler: the milk, the meat you meant to cook, the leftovers — and any medicine that has to stay cold. Packed with ice, a good cooler keeps them safely chilled and spares you from opening the fridge and speeding up its clock.

Plain **block ice** lasts far longer than cubes, and those frozen water jugs from your freezer do the same job for free. For a freezer full of value in a long outage, **dry ice** can buy you extra days — but handle it carefully: never touch it with bare hands, and only use it with a window cracked for air, because it gives off a gas you shouldn't breathe in a closed room.

It's worth keeping a cooler or two and a few reusable ice packs in the basement alongside your storm supplies. They cost little, they never go stale, and they turn a nervous outage into a well-handled one. If a neighbor or family member across town still has power, their spare freezer shelf is a fine backup too.

✓ Coolers buy you time

Even without a generator at all, a cooler of ice can keep your most important food safe for the length of a typical outage. With a generator, it's the perfect partner — handling the fridge's odds and ends so the generator can focus on the freezer.

Your quick fridge-and-freezer checklist

Tear this page out and tape it inside a cabinet door. When the power goes, you'll be glad it's there.

- ☐ Thermometers sitting in the refrigerator and the freezer.
- ☐ A few jugs of water frozen and filling the freezer's empty space.
- ☐ One good heavy-duty outdoor extension cord on hand, long enough to reach.
- ☐ A couple of coolers and some ice or reusable ice packs in storage.
- ☐ You know which appliance is your priority — usually the fullest freezer.
- ☐ A safe outdoor generator spot picked out, at least 20 feet from the house.
- ☐ Working carbon-monoxide alarms inside, with fresh batteries.
- ☐ Bill's number handy for a second opinion: (330) 200-8042.

Eight small check marks, and an outage becomes a minor inconvenience instead of a freezer full of heartbreak. That's a good trade.

The short version

If you remember nothing else from this guide, remember these:

- Food-safety experts say a closed fridge stays safe about four hours, a full freezer about two days, and a half-full one about a day.
- The golden rule saves the most food: keep the doors shut, and open with a plan when you must.
- You don't run the generator around the clock — cycle it. Run a while, let the cold coast, then repeat.
- Keep the freezer full (jugs of water fill the gaps), guard it first, and let a cheap thermometer do the judging.
- When in doubt, throw it out — and I'm only a phone call away if you'd like a hand.

How Long Your Food Stays Safe

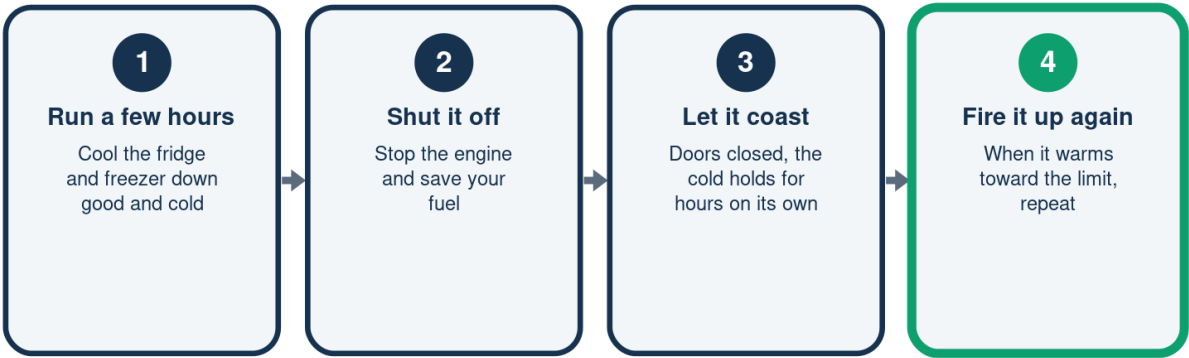
The food-safety clock, at a glance

	How long it holds	What to do
Fridge, closed	About 4 hours	Then watch the clock
Full freezer	About 48 hours	Keep the lid shut
Half-full freezer	About 24 hours	Fill gaps with jugs
The 40 degree line	Above it 2+ hours?	When in doubt, toss it

Food-safety guidance for an unopened unit. Every door you open speeds up the clock.

Run a While, Coast, Repeat

You never run it around the clock



The cold coasts in between runs — that's what saves your fuel.

Fridge vs. Freezer

Guard one, watch the other

	The refrigerator	The freezer
Stays safe	About 4 hours	About 24-48 hours
Golden rule	Open with a plan	Just leave it shut
Fill it up?	Not needed	Yes - water jugs
Run it first?	Top up each run	Guard this cold

Freezer holds the stakes; fridge holds the clock.

What Are You Protecting?

Match the generator to the stakes

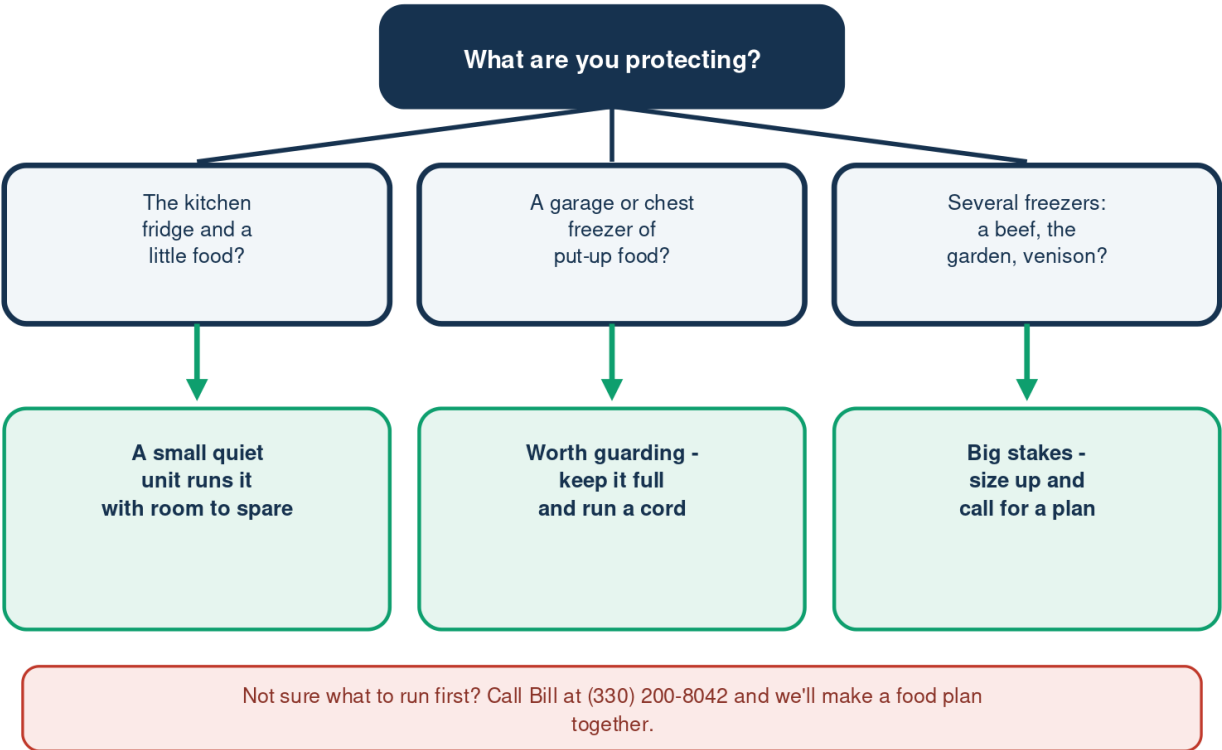


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

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— *Bill*



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