



An Extended Guide · No. 1258

Powering a Sump Pump in Storm Season

Keeping the basement dry

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

Hello, and welcome

If you have a sump pump, you already know the low worry that comes with a hard rain — and the worse one when the lights flicker at the same time, because the very storm filling your basement is the one taking the power your pump needs. This guide is about keeping it running, 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 walk through what a sump pump needs from a generator, why most pumps simply plug in while a few are hardwired, how a battery-backup pump covers the gap and the times no one is home, and the small habits — testing the pump, a high-water alarm, a clear discharge line — that keep a basement dry. Whether you have a finished basement in town or a country home juggling the well and septic too, 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.

The cruel timing of a flooded basement

Here's the hard truth that makes a sump pump such a worry in Ohio: the very storm that fills your basement with water is almost always the same storm that takes your power away.

A sump pump sits in a little pit at the lowest point of your basement or crawl space. When groundwater rises after a heavy rain or a fast snowmelt, it seeps in and collects in that pit, and the pump switches on to push it back outside before it ever reaches your floor. On an ordinary rainy day it does this quietly, over and over, and you never think about it.

But the big storms — the ones that really soak the ground and send water pouring toward your foundation — are exactly the ones that knock down limbs, snap power lines, and leave the neighborhood dark. So at the precise moment your sump pump has the most work it has ever had to do, it loses the electricity it needs to do it.

That's when basements flood: not because the pump failed, but because it sat there powerless while the water climbed. For a finished basement full of furniture, a family room, or a lifetime of stored keepsakes, that can turn into thousands of dollars of heartbreak in a single night.

So this guide is about closing that gap — making sure that when the power quits and the water rises, your pump keeps right on working. There are a few good ways to do it, from a simple generator and a cord to a battery backup that kicks on all by itself, and we'll walk through each one.

✓ It's not a rare event around here

In Portage County, the spring thaw and our heavy summer thunderstorms are the classic basement-flooders, and they're the same weather that drops the power. If your basement has a sump pump at all, it's because your home needs one — which means an outage during a storm is exactly when you can't afford to lose it.

How your sump pump actually works

You don't need to be a plumber, but a couple of minutes understanding the parts makes every choice ahead easier — especially why keeping it powered matters so much.

At the low point of your basement floor sits a **pit** — sometimes called the sump or the basin — a hole a couple of feet deep with the pump down inside it. Water that seeps in around your foundation is guided into this pit, and the pump's whole job is to lift it up and send it back outside, away from the house.

The clever part is the **float switch**. Much like the float in a toilet tank, it rides on top of the water. As the pit fills, the float rises, and when it reaches a set height it flips the pump on. The pump runs until the water drops back down, then the float falls and shuts it off again. That's why a sump pump isn't running all the time — only when the water calls for it.

From the pump, a **discharge pipe** carries the water up and out through the wall, then away from the foundation. Keeping that pipe clear and, in winter, unfrozen is its own small chore we'll come back to, because a pump that runs but can't push the water anywhere is no help at all.

Most homes have one of two kinds: a **submersible** pump that sits down in the pit under the water, or a **pedestal** pump with its motor up on a shaft above it. Either way, the heart of it is an electric **motor** — and like any motor, it takes a big gulp of power the instant it starts. That start-up gulp, more than anything, decides what it needs from a generator, which is exactly where we're headed next.

✓ Go take a look before the storm

Lift the lid on your sump pit some calm afternoon and watch it work — run some water in and see the float rise and the pump kick on. Knowing where it is, how it sounds, and how its cord is plugged in makes everything in this guide concrete, and it takes five minutes.

What your sump pump needs from a generator

Here's a reassuring place to start: keeping a single sump pump running is well within reach of even a small, quiet generator.

While it's actually pumping, a typical home sump pump draws only a **modest amount of power** — often just a few hundred watts, give or take, no more than a couple of bright lamps. And remember, it's not even running most of the time; it works in short bursts whenever the float calls for it.

There's one wrinkle, and it's the same one every motor shares. The instant the pump switches on, it grabs a much bigger **gulp of power** for a second or two — commonly several times its steady running draw — before settling right back down. That brief **start-up surge** is the real number a generator has to be ready for. Size only for the running figure and the pump may stall the engine the moment it kicks on.

The practical upshot is friendly: a modest inverter generator usually runs one sump pump without breaking a sweat, often with room to spare for some lights, the phones, and the internet besides. The honest catch is that pumps vary — a bigger pump in a wetter basement asks for more — so it's worth knowing your pump's own numbers rather than guessing.

Clean power is a nice bonus but not a strict must here. A sump pump's motor isn't fussy the way a computer is, so it'll run on rougher power too. Where an inverter unit earns its keep is that the same quiet, clean machine that runs your pump can also safely run the sensitive electronics you'll want during the same outage.

✓ Find your pump's numbers

Somewhere on the pump's label, or in the paperwork from when it was installed, you'll usually find its horsepower and sometimes its wattage. Jot those down and set them aside — they're exactly what I need to help you match a generator with enough muscle for the start-up surge. If you can't find them, we can work it out together.

The easy part: most sump pumps just plug in

Now the good news that makes this whole thing manageable: most residential sump pumps simply plug into a nearby wall outlet.

If yours does — and most do — then backing it up is refreshingly straightforward. It's usually a regular 120-volt outlet right beside the pit. You run power from your generator to that pump, and it works exactly as it always has.

The tool for the job is one good, **heavy-duty outdoor extension cord**. Heavy-duty means a thick cord clearly rated for outdoor use — the wire gauge number is smaller for thicker wire — long enough to reach from the generator outside to the pump inside. When the power's out, you unplug the pump from its dead wall outlet and plug it into the cord running from the running generator. That's genuinely most of the job.

A few sensible habits make it safe and reliable. Keep the run as **short** as you reasonably can, and resist chaining two or three thin cords together to reach — each connection is a weak point, and a long, thin path loses power along the way and can leave the pump straining. One properly sized cord beats a daisy chain every time. Bring it in through a cracked window or door, or better yet a proper low-profile cord or generator inlet made for the purpose.

That's the plug-in case, and it covers the large majority of homes. The generator lives outside doing its noisy work, a single stout cord carries power to the pit, and your pump keeps the basement dry. Simple, and exactly the kind of setup you can do yourself with a little coaching.

! Don't back-feed the house

It can be tempting to try to power the basement outlet by plugging a generator into a wall socket or a dryer plug. Never do this — it's dangerous, against code, and it can injure a lineworker restoring your power. Run a cord straight to the pump instead. Powering a built-in circuit safely is a job for a transfer switch, which is the very next page.

If your pump is hardwired: a different path

A smaller number of sump pumps aren't plugged in at all — they're wired straight into your electrical panel, and that changes the approach.

A **hardwired** pump has its wires running directly to a circuit rather than to an outlet you can reach. It's more common with certain heavier-duty pumps and some newer installations. If yours has no plug to pull, the simple cord trick on the last page won't work, and you shouldn't try to force it.

The safe answer is the same one used for any hardwired thing — a furnace, a well pump — you want to run on a generator: a licensed electrician installs a **transfer switch** or a panel **interlock** with an outdoor inlet. That lets you flip the sump pump's circuit over to generator power with a single safe connection, one that keeps your generator strictly separated from the utility lines so no power can ever back-feed onto them. You run one cord from the generator to the inlet, throw the switch, and the pump comes to life.

This isn't a do-it-yourself job, and I wouldn't want it to be — it involves your home's wiring and the panel. It's genuinely straightforward for a good electrician, though, and there's a whole guide in this series on transfer switches and interlocks if you'd like to understand exactly what's involved before you call one.

Not sure which kind you have? It's easy to check: follow the pump's cord. If it ends in a plug in a nearby outlet, you're in the easy, plug-in camp from the last page. If the wires disappear into a box or conduit with no plug, it's hardwired, and a transfer switch is your path.

★ I'll coordinate the whole thing

If your pump turns out to be hardwired, don't let that stop you — this is exactly the kind of project I pull together for folks. I'll help you pick and size the generator, bring in a licensed electrician for the transfer switch, and handle the rest, so you have one friendly point of contact start to finish. Just call me at (330) 200-8042.

A battery backup: the safety net that never sleeps

If a generator is the muscle of your storm plan, a battery-backup sump pump is the reflexes.

It's a second pump that sits right in the same pit, powered by a rechargeable battery that stays topped up off your household power. When the electricity fails and your main pump goes dead, the battery unit senses the water rising and **takes over automatically** — no cord to run, no switch to throw, nobody who even has to be home.

That's exactly why it pairs so beautifully with a generator, covering the two moments a portable generator can't. First, the **gap at the start**: even the best generator takes a few minutes to wheel out, fuel, and start, and in a hard rain the water doesn't wait politely. The battery pump holds the line during those minutes. Second, the times **nobody's home** — at work, away for the weekend, or simply asleep at three in the morning. A generator needs a person to run it; a battery backup does not.

The honest limit is stamina. A battery holds only so much charge, so a battery backup is measured in a certain number of pump cycles or a stretch of hours, not days. In a long outage it can run down. That's precisely where the generator comes back in — to carry the long haul, and to recharge the battery between storms.

So these aren't rival choices; they're partners. The battery covers the instant, automatic, when-you're-away job. The generator covers the long, heavy-duty, someone-is-home job. Together they cover nearly everything the weather can throw at your basement.

★ The pairing I most often recommend

For a basement worth protecting, a battery-backup pump plus a generator is the combination I steer folks toward most. One covers the gap and the times you're away; the other carries the long outage. I'm glad to help you choose a battery unit and size a generator that work well together — (330) 200-8042.

How long can the pit wait?

Unlike a refrigerator with a friendly, fixed clock, a sump pit's timer depends entirely on how fast the water is coming in.

There's no single number, because a gentle drizzle and a driving downpour fill the pit at wildly different rates. This is important to understand, because it shapes how urgently you have to act when the power drops.

The way to gauge your own is to notice how hard your pump normally works. On a light rainy day it might kick on every few minutes or even less often, which means the pit fills slowly and you'd have a comfortable while before it overflowed. In the teeth of a real storm, though, a busy pump can cycle every minute or two — and that tells you the pit would fill and spill in a matter of minutes if the pump stopped. The harder it's raining, the less time you have.

So the practical rule is simple: when the power goes out during a storm, **don't wait to see what happens**. Get the generator running and the pump powered promptly, while the pit still has room. Waiting to find out how much time you have is how basements flood, because on the worst nights the answer is: not much.

This is also the clearest argument for a battery backup. It removes the guesswork entirely by taking over the instant the power drops, so the pit never gets a head start on you while you're fetching the generator. If you have one, it buys you the minutes you need; if you don't, treat every storm outage as urgent from the first second.

! Don't gamble on a quick outage

It's tempting to wait a few minutes hoping the power blinks back on. In a mild outage that's fine, but during a heavy storm those few minutes can be the difference between a dry floor and an inch of water. When it's really coming down, power the pump first and relax second.

Get ready before the storm, not during it

If there's one habit that separates a dry basement from a flooded one, it's this: get everything ready before the storm arrives, not in the middle of it.

A generator is a calm, sunny-afternoon machine to set up. Trying to wrestle one out, fuel it, and start it in a dark downpour — wet hands, wet ground, water everywhere — is miserable at best and unsafe at worst. You simply cannot do it safely once the storm is on top of you.

So when the forecast turns threatening, take fifteen minutes while it's still dry and walk through a simple pre-storm routine. **Fuel it up** with fresh gas and stabilizer, or check that your propane tank is full. **Test the pump** by pouring a bucket of water in the pit and watching it kick on, so you know it works. **Stage the generator** in its safe spot outside, and think through how you'll keep it dry and running. And get your **cords ready** — the right heavy-duty outdoor cord, uncoiled and long enough to reach.

Do that, and when the power actually drops you're not scrambling. You're simply carrying out to a machine that's already fueled and proven, dropping a cord you already ran, and plugging in a pump you already tested. The whole thing becomes a two-minute routine instead of a frantic emergency in the rain.

This is the difference preparation makes. The storm is stressful enough without discovering, by flashlight, that the gas can is empty or the pump didn't come on. Front-load the calm work into the calm hours, and leave yourself nothing to do in the storm but the easy part.

✓ Watch the sky, then get set

When the weather service starts talking about heavy rain, rapid snowmelt, or a big thaw, treat it as your cue. A few minutes of readiness before the first raindrop is worth more than any amount of scrambling once the basement starts to fill. Being early is the whole game here.

Test the pump with a bucket of water

The most reassuring five minutes you can spend on your whole storm plan is a simple bucket test.

A sump pump can sit idle for weeks between rains, and now and then one quietly seizes up or a float sticks — and the worst possible time to discover that is with water climbing toward your floor. So test it, on purpose, when everything's calm.

The test couldn't be simpler. **Pour a bucket of water — or two — into the pit** and watch what happens. The float should rise, the pump should kick on within a moment, the water level should drop, and the pump should shut itself off as the float falls. That's the whole cycle it will perform in a storm, acted out for you on demand. While you're at it, step outside and confirm the water is actually coming out of the discharge pipe and running away from the house.

Use your senses. Does it start promptly, or does it hesitate? Does it drain the pit briskly, or struggle? Any grinding, rattling, or a hum that never turns into pumping is a sign to have it looked at. A pump that fails this gentle test on a sunny day was going to fail you in the storm — far better to find out now, with time to fix it.

The real gold star is to run the test **on generator power**. Fire up the generator, power the pump through your cord, then pour in your bucket and watch the whole chain work together — generator, cord, pump, discharge. That's your complete storm setup, proven start to finish, so the real night is just repeating something you've already done.

✓ Put it on the calendar

Test the pump a few times a year, and always when storm season is coming on. Tie it to something you'll remember — the first warm week of spring, say, when the thaw and the rains begin. Twenty minutes of testing buys a whole season of not wondering.

A high-water alarm: your early warning

For only a little money, a high-water alarm is one of the smartest things you can add to a basement.

It's a small sensor you set at a chosen height in or near the sump pit, wired to a loud buzzer. If the water ever rises past where a healthy pump should have kept it, the alarm goes off — a plain, insistent warning that something's wrong while you still have time to do something about it.

That warning is worth a great deal, because a sump pump fails silently. Whether it has quit, come unplugged, been overwhelmed by a downpour, or simply lost power in an outage, the first sign is usually water where it shouldn't be — and by then you may be mopping. An alarm turns that silent creep into an early shout, often long before the water reaches your floor, let alone your furniture.

The modern versions are better still. Some high-water alarms are **smart** — they connect to your home Wi-Fi and send an alert straight to your phone. That's genuinely priceless when you're not home: a message that says the water is rising in your basement, arriving while you're at work or away for the weekend, gives you the chance to call a neighbor, hurry home, or at least know what you're walking into. It also tells you the power is out and your pump needs help.

Think of the alarm as the tripwire in a layered plan. The battery backup does the automatic pumping, the generator carries the long haul, and the alarm is what tells you — wherever you are — that the storm is testing your defenses and it's time to pay attention.

✓ A few dollars, real peace of mind

A basic high-water alarm costs very little and takes minutes to set. If your basement is finished or holds anything you'd hate to lose, a smart one that pings your phone is money exceptionally well spent. I'm happy to help you pick one and get it talking to your Wi-Fi.

Keep the discharge line clear and unfrozen

Here's a failure that catches people even when the pump and the power are both fine: the water has nowhere to go.

A sump pump pushes water out through its **discharge line**, and if that pipe is blocked anywhere along its length, the pump can run its heart out and the pit will still fill. All your generator and battery planning comes to nothing if the outlet is plugged.

So keep the line clear. Walk to where it comes out of the house and make sure the opening isn't buried in mulch, choked with leaves, blocked by a nest, or sunk in mud. Debris, lawn clippings, and curious critters all like to find their way into a pipe opening. A minute checking it before storm season, and again after yard work, saves a lot of grief.

Winter brings its own trouble, and it's a real one in Ohio. The water in an outdoor discharge line can **freeze**, and once a plug of ice forms, the pump is pushing against a wall — which can overwork and burn out the motor, or send the water backing up into your basement. Keeping the outdoor run **short and sloped downhill** so it drains empty between cycles helps a great deal, and some folks add a special fitting that lets the water escape if the far end ices up. If you get a hard freeze on top of wet ground, keep an eye on it.

Finally, mind **where it dumps**. The water should run well away from your foundation and downhill, not puddle right beside the house where it soaks straight back down to the pit. Sending it a good distance off keeps you from pumping the same water round and round.

! A blocked line beats the best generator

It's worth repeating: a spotless generator, a full battery, and a perfect pump are all defeated by a frozen or clogged discharge pipe. Of everything in this guide, the discharge line is the piece most often forgotten — so give it a look whenever you check the pump.

If you live in town: city and suburb

Most of my customers here in town — in Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro, and Aurora — are on city water and city power, and for them the sump pump is often the single biggest thing worth protecting in an outage, because of what's down in the basement.

In town, the thing that makes the sump pump such a priority is what's usually **down there**: a finished basement. A family room, a spare bedroom, an office, the carpet and drywall, the furnace and water heater, the boxes of photos and keepsakes on the shelves. A basement flood in a home like that isn't a wet floor to mop — it's drywall to tear out, carpet to haul, and often thousands of dollars of damage in a single stormy night. So even though city water spares you the well-pump worry, the sump pump quietly climbs to the top of your outage list.

The good news is that protecting it is very doable, and usually doesn't take a big machine. Because you're on city water, no well pump is forcing you toward a large, loud generator. A **small, quiet inverter unit** can keep the sump pump going and still have room for the refrigerator, some lights, the phones, and the internet — run a few hours at a time, in eco mode, kind to the neighbors close by. For most town homes, that modest setup is plenty.

What deserves extra thought in town is the **gap and the away problem**, precisely because the stakes are so high and basement floods happen fast and unnoticed. This is where the layered plan really shines: a **battery-backup pump** that kicks on the instant the power drops, a **smart high-water alarm** that pings your phone from anywhere, and the **generator** for the long haul. The battery and the alarm cover you when you're at work or asleep; the generator carries the long outage once you're on it.

✓ If you rent, find out who's responsible

In a rented home or a condo, the sump pump and its backup may be the landlord's or the association's job, not yours — but don't assume. Ask, in writing, who keeps the basement dry when the power's out. If it turns out to be on you, the same small-generator-plus-battery-backup plan fits an in-town home nicely, and I can help you set it up.

If you're in the country on a well

Out in the townships — Atwater, Rootstown, Deerfield, and Palmyra — the basement is only part of the story. A country home in a long outage is often juggling three water problems at once, and knowing how to prioritize is the whole game.

There's the **sump pump** fighting to keep the basement dry. There's the **well pump** that makes your drinking and washing water — and, as its own guide in this series explains, most well pumps run on 240 volts that a small, quiet inverter simply can't make. And some homes have a **septic pump** as well: certain systems, like a mound or an aerobic setup, use an electric pump to move the effluent, and that pump needs power too.

! 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.

The key is knowing how to **prioritize**, because you rarely need all three running at the same instant. During the storm itself, the **sump pump is the urgent one** — water is actively rising against your foundation right now, and it's a modest 120-volt load a small generator handles easily. The **well pump** can be rationed: store water ahead of the storm, and run the well in cycles when the rain eases to refill your pressure tank and jugs. The **septic pump** can usually wait the longest of the three — its tank holds a buffer, so you can go easy on water use and run it only now and then.

That prioritizing also shapes what you buy. If you've already stepped up to a larger 120/240-volt generator to run the well pump, the good news is that it has ample room to run the little sump pump right alongside — the hard part carries the easy part. If your only real worry is the basement, a small unit does the sump pump on its own. Either way, a transfer switch installed by an electrician lets you choose which circuits to power and take turns among them.

★ A whole-place plan is worth a call

Between the sump pump, the well, the septic, and the everyday essentials, a country home in a long outage has real juggling to do — what to run, in what order, and how big a generator it takes. That's exactly the kind of plan I love to work out with folks. Bring me your list and we'll size it and sort the priorities together: (330) 200-8042.

The safety talk: carbon monoxide

You'll likely be running this generator in the worst of the weather, with water around and the basement on your mind — which makes one safety rule matter more than ever: the generator burns fuel, so it gives off carbon monoxide, and it must live outside and well away, no matter how hard it's raining.

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.

Water and power: the second danger to respect

Carbon monoxide is the first rule and it never bends, but a flooding storm adds a second hazard worth its own page: water and electricity, which must never meet.

A generator makes electricity, and standing water, soaked ground, and live power are a genuinely dangerous mix. In the very weather when you most want the generator, you have to be most careful where and how it runs.

Start by resisting the two worst temptations. In a downpour, every instinct says to tuck the generator somewhere dry — the garage, a shed, the basement, or right up against the house under an overhang. **Never do it.** Those enclosed and half-enclosed spots are exactly where carbon monoxide pools and kills. And whatever you do, never set a generator **in or beside the flooding area itself** — running a fuel engine in the wet basement you're trying to pump out combines every danger at once.

Out in the open where it belongs, keep the machine **dry and up off the wet ground**. Set it on a stable, dry surface, not in a puddle or on soaked earth, and shelter it with a proper open, vented **generator canopy** made for running units — the kind that keeps rain off while letting the exhaust breathe freely. Never drape it with a tarp or box it in; that traps both heat and carbon monoxide. Keep your **hands dry** when you touch it or its cords, and use cords and outlets with **ground-fault (GFCI) protection**, which cuts the power fast if electricity ever finds a path it shouldn't.

None of this is meant to scare you off — a generator run properly in a storm is safe, and people do it well every day. It's simply that the storm stacks the deck, so the ordinary rules get more important, not less. Dry footing, open air, a real canopy, dry hands, and plenty of distance from both the house and the water: get those right and you can run it through the worst of it with confidence.

! Never in the water, never enclosed

Two lines to carry away from this page: a generator never runs in the flooding area or any wet, low spot, and it never runs in a garage, basement, shed, or against the house. Outside, dry, elevated, and well away — in a storm those rules protect you from carbon monoxide and electric shock both. When in doubt, more distance and more open air.

When the power actually goes: a calm routine

Because you did the hard part before the storm, the real moment is short and calm.

Carry the already-fueled, already-tested generator out to its dry, open spot at least 20 feet from the house. Start it and give it a moment to settle. Run your heavy-duty cord in to the pump, unplug the pump from its dead wall outlet, and plug it into the cord. Step outside once to confirm water is coming out of the discharge — and that's it, the basement is protected.

Then **keep an eye on the pit**. Most of the time a single pump on generator power keeps up with the water just fine, cycling on and off exactly as it would on utility power. If the rain is truly torrential and the water seems to be gaining, that's the night you're glad to have a battery-backup pump sharing the load, or a plan to bail with a bucket in a pinch. Watching the pit for the first little while tells you whether you're comfortably ahead.

Remember the pump runs only in **bursts**, so between its cycles the generator has power to spare. This is when you run the other essentials — the refrigerator, some lights, the phones, the internet — just leave a little **headroom** so the pump's start-up surge always has room, and start big things one at a time. If the generator's overload light comes on, shed something small like a space heater; the pump takes priority.

Keep an eye on fuel and refuel as needed — always **shutting the generator down first**, never pouring gas near a hot, running engine. And never let the machine creep toward the house or into the garage for the night; the carbon-monoxide rule holds every hour of every outage, right through till the power comes back.

✓ Write your steps on a card

Once you've done it once, jot the exact steps for your setup on an index card and tape it inside the basement door: carry out, start, run cord, plug in pump, check discharge.

On a stressful stormy night you'll be glad to just follow the card instead of remembering. I'm happy to help you write one for your home.

The one gap a generator can't cover: when you're away

A portable generator has one honest limitation, and it's worth facing squarely: it needs a person.

Someone has to be home to carry it out, start it, and plug in the pump. Storms, of course, don't check your schedule — plenty of basements flood on an ordinary workday, or while the family is away for a weekend, with a perfectly good generator sitting useless in the garage. So for the hours nobody's home, your protection has to work without you.

That's the whole case for the **automatic layer**. A **battery-backup pump** asks no one's permission — it senses the water and takes over the instant the power drops, whether you're at the office or asleep or three states away. A **smart high-water alarm** is its perfect partner, sending a message straight to your phone the moment the water climbs too high. Between them, they pump automatically and tell you what's happening, so an outage you're not there for doesn't become a flood you come home to.

It's worth adding a **human layer** too, for the times an outage runs long while you're gone. A trusted neighbor or nearby family member with a spare key — and a simple how-to card taped inside the basement door — can carry out and start the generator if your battery backup is running low and you can't get home. It's the same neighborly favor as watching the house or feeding the cat, and it can save your basement.

If you travel often, are gone all day, or simply can't count on being home when the weather turns, let that shape your plan. The generator is still the workhorse for the long haul, but lean harder on the automatic pieces — a good battery backup and a phone-alerting alarm — because they're the part of the plan that protects you when you're the one thing missing.

★ Let's cover the hours you're away

If your basement matters and your schedule's unpredictable, the automatic layer is where I'd put your attention first. I can help you choose a battery-backup pump and a smart alarm, get them working with your phone and Wi-Fi, and set up the generator for when you're home. Call me and we'll build a plan that doesn't depend on you being there: (330) 200-8042.

How I can help

Keeping a basement dry through a storm is a very practical, down-to-earth kind of help — matching a generator to your pump, setting up the cords, adding a battery backup and an alarm — and it's exactly the sort of thing I do for folks all over Portage County.

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 your sump pump turns out to be hardwired rather than plug-in, connecting a generator to it safely means a transfer switch or interlock, and that hookup is a licensed electrician's job — I'm a tech-help person, not an electrician. So I coordinate a good one for that part and handle the rest: helping you choose and size the generator, setting up the plug-in pumps and cords, adding a battery backup and a smart alarm, and getting your other electronics happily back on. 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.

Your sump-pump questions, answered

The questions I hear most from folks working out how to keep the basement dry when the power goes.

Q: Can I just plug my sump pump into the generator?

For most homes, yes — most sump pumps plug into a nearby outlet, so you run a heavy-duty outdoor cord from the generator and plug the pump into it. If yours is hardwired into the panel with no plug, that takes a transfer switch installed by an electrician instead.

Q: What size generator do I need for the sump pump?

Less than you might think. A single pump draws only a modest amount while running, though it takes a big gulp when it starts — so you size for that start-up surge. A small, quiet inverter unit usually runs one pump with room to spare, but check your pump's own numbers to be sure.

Q: Do I still need a battery backup if I have a generator?

They work best together. A battery backup kicks on automatically and instantly — covering the minutes before you start the generator, and the times no one's home. The generator carries the long haul and recharges the battery. One covers the gap; the other covers the duration.

Q: How much time do I have if the pump stops in a storm?

It depends entirely on how fast the water's coming in — minutes in a hard downpour, longer in a light rain. Because a busy pump can fill and spill a pit quickly, treat a storm outage as urgent: power the pump promptly rather than waiting to see.

Q: Where do I put the generator during a flood?

Outside, dry, elevated, and at least 20 feet from the house — never in the garage, basement, or the flooding area itself. A storm mixes carbon monoxide with standing water and electricity, so keep the machine in open air on dry footing, under a proper vented canopy, with dry hands.

Q: Can you set this all up for me?

Gladly. I'll help you match a generator to your pump, get the cords and a battery backup sorted, add a high-water alarm, and coordinate an electrician if your pump is hardwired. It's one of the more satisfying jobs I do — call me and we'll get your basement covered before the next storm.

Your sump-pump readiness checklist

Tear this out and tape it inside a cabinet or the basement door. Work down it once on a calm day and you'll be ready long before the storm.

- ☐ Found your sump pump's type (plug-in or hardwired) and its horsepower or wattage.
- ☐ One good heavy-duty outdoor extension cord on hand, long enough to reach the pit.
- ☐ Generator fueled ahead of the storm (fresh gas with stabilizer, or a full propane tank).
- ☐ Pump tested with a bucket of water — float rises, pump runs, water drains, discharge flows outside.
- ☐ A battery-backup pump in the pit for the gap and the times no one's home.
- ☐ A high-water alarm set — ideally a smart one that pings your phone.
- ☐ The discharge line checked: clear of debris, sloped to drain, and guarded against freezing.
- ☐ A safe outdoor generator spot picked out — dry, elevated, at least 20 feet from the house, never in the flooding area.
- ☐ Working carbon-monoxide alarms inside, on every level, with fresh batteries.
- ☐ A neighbor or family member who can start the generator if a long outage catches you away.

Ten check marks between you and a dry basement, whatever the sky throws down. Not a bad trade for an afternoon's work.

The short version

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

- The cruel timing of Ohio storms is the whole problem: the rain that floods your basement comes with the outage that stops your sump pump. Closing that gap is the goal.
- Most sump pumps simply plug in, so a heavy-duty cord from a generator runs them; a hardwired pump needs a transfer switch installed by a licensed electrician.
- A battery-backup pump is the perfect partner to a generator — it kicks on automatically to cover the gap at the start and the times no one's home, while the generator carries the long haul.
- Get ready before the storm, test the pump with a bucket, add a high-water alarm, and keep the discharge line clear and unfrozen.
- Run the generator outside, dry, and well away — never in the garage or the flooding area, because a storm mixes carbon monoxide with water. And I'm a phone call away.

Powering a Sump Pump at a Glance

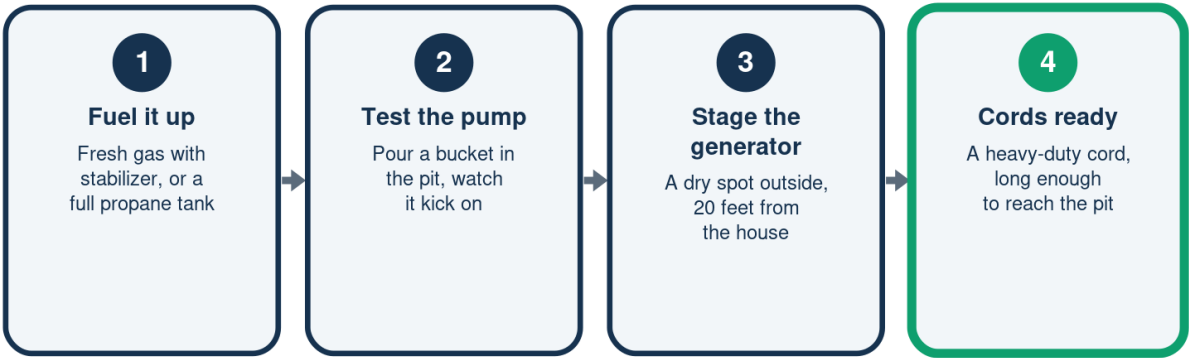
The plain-English version

	The short answer	Why it matters
The problem	Storm, and no power	The basement floods
Most pumps	Just plug in	A cord from the gen
What it needs	A modest draw	But a big start surge
A safety net	A battery backup	Bridges the gap
Big rule	Keep the gen dry	Outside, never in water

The storm that floods the basement is the one that cuts the power — a generator and a battery backup keep the pit ahead of the water.

Get Ready Before the Storm

Do the calm work in the calm hours



You can't safely set up a generator in a downpour — so fuel, test, and stage it before the rain.

Generator vs. Battery Backup

Two tools that work best together

	A generator	A battery backup
Runs how long	As long as fuel	Hours, then fades
Needs you there	Yes, someone runs it	No, it's automatic
When you're away	No help on its own	Covers you
At the first minute	Takes time to start	Instant, by itself
Best role	The long haul	The gap and away net

Not either-or — the battery covers the gap and the times you're away; the generator carries the long haul.

How's Your Sump Pump Backed Up?

Three ways to keep the pit ahead of the water

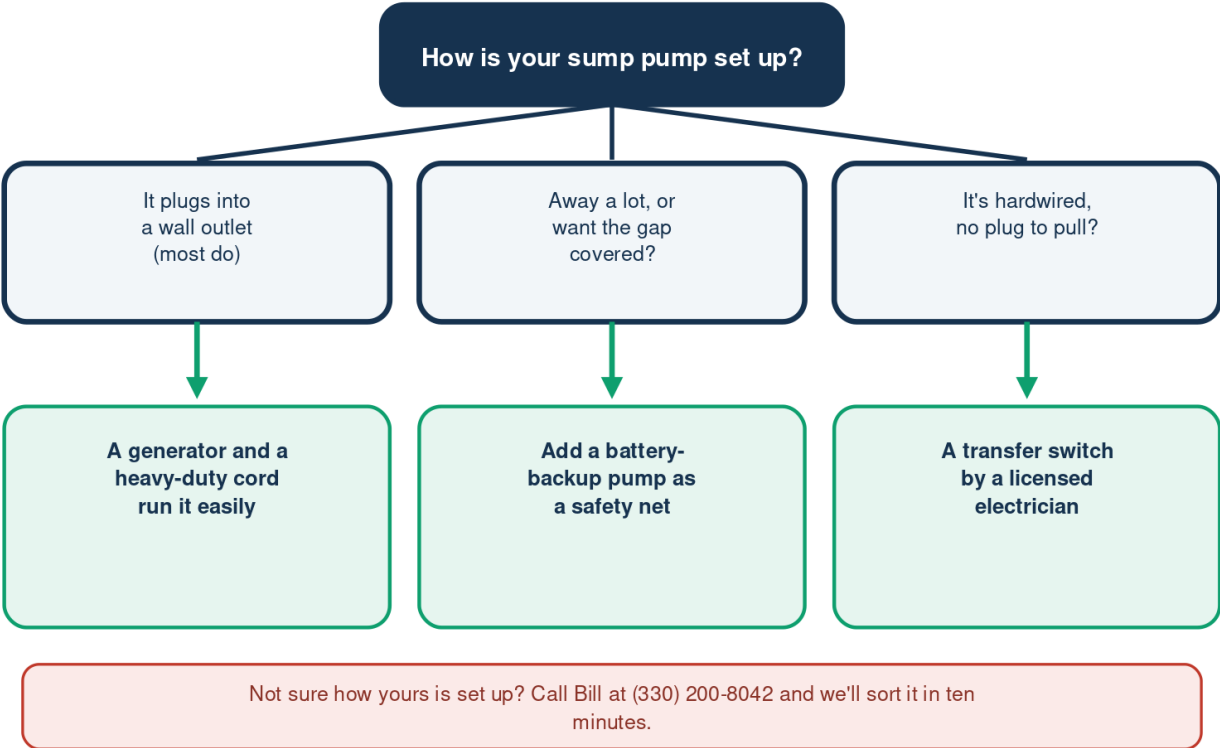


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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