



An Extended Guide · No. 1255

Backing Up Your Well Pump

Keeping the water
running in an outage

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

! Before you begin — a quick safety note.

This guide covers work involving your well pump's 240-volt wiring and your electrical panel, which can cause serious injury, fire, or property damage if something goes wrong. It's here for general information only, not professional advice. If you're not completely comfortable — or if your local codes require a licensed pro — please stop and hire a qualified electrician. Turn off the power at the breaker before any electrical step. Never work on gas lines yourself; if you smell gas, leave right away and call your gas company or 911. There's no shame in calling a pro — that's often the smart, safe choice. You follow this guide at your own risk. — Bill

Hello, and welcome

If you're on a private well out in the country, you already know the quiet dread when the lights flicker in a storm — because for you, losing power means losing water, too. 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 why a well loses water in an outage, the big surprise that most pumps need 240 volts a small, quiet generator can't make, how to size and safely connect one that can, a device that can shrink the pump's power surge, and the simple habit of storing water as a backup. Whether you decide on a generator or not, you'll come away with a plan.

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 part people forget: no power, no water

If you're on a private well, an outage takes something city folks never lose — the water itself. It's the thing almost nobody thinks about until the first storm proves it.

Here in the country, your water doesn't come from a city main. It comes from a well in your yard, with an electric pump down inside it doing all the work — lifting water up and into the house every time you turn a tap. That pump runs on electricity from your breaker panel, the same as your lights.

So the moment the power goes out, the pump goes quiet. You might get a flush or two and a little water from the tank, and then nothing. No faucets, no showers, no dishes, no flushing without hauling a bucket from somewhere. In a long outage that turns from an inconvenience into a real hardship fast.

This is why, for so many of my country customers, backing up the **well pump** is the whole reason they want a generator in the first place. Keeping the refrigerator cold is nice; keeping the water running is essential. This guide is about doing that safely and correctly.

It's also why the plainest backup of all — storing water ahead of a storm — belongs in every country home's plan, generator or not. We'll come back to that, because a generator that can't start the pump still can't make water, and even the right one takes a moment to fire up.

✓ A quick way to picture it

Think of your well like a straw in the ground with a little motor at the bottom. The motor is what lifts the water. Cut its power and the straw just sits there full — the water's down there, but nothing's pulling it up to you.

Is backing up the pump right for you?

Before we talk generators and volts, here's an honest question worth sitting with: how much do you need running water during an outage? The answer shapes everything that follows.

For some folks, stored water is plenty. If your outages are usually short, it's just you or the two of you, and you don't mind flushing with a bucket for a day, then keeping a few jugs of drinking water and a full bathtub on hand may be all the backup you truly need. There's no shame in the simple path — it's cheap, foolproof, and always works.

For others, running water isn't optional. If you've got a full house, someone with a medical need, animals to water, a long driveway that keeps the outages long, or you simply refuse to go without a shower and a working toilet — then backing up the pump earns its keep. Around here, ice storms and summer thunderstorms can take the power for days, not hours.

Most country homes land somewhere in the middle, and end up doing **both**: a generator that can run the pump when they need water, and stored water for the gap before it's running and for shorter blips not worth firing up the machine. That belt-and-suspenders approach is what I usually steer folks toward.

If you decide the pump is worth backing up, the rest of this guide walks you through doing it right — the 240-volt reality, sizing, a safe hookup, and the mistakes to avoid. If you decide stored water is enough for now, skip ahead to the water-storage page and you're most of the way there.

★ No pressure, either way

I'll never talk you into more generator than you need. Some of my happiest well customers spent very little and just got serious about storing water. Others needed the pump running and we did it properly. Call me and we'll figure out which one you are — (330) 200-8042.

How your well actually works

You don't need to be a plumber, but a few minutes understanding your well makes every choice ahead easier — especially why the pump doesn't run all the time.

Most country homes have a **submersible pump** — a long, narrow motor and pump sitting down inside the well casing, often a good many feet underground, below the water line. When it runs, it pushes water up a pipe and into your house. It's sealed, quiet, and out of sight, which is partly why folks forget it's even there until it stops.

The clever part is the **pressure tank**, usually a big metal tank in the basement or a utility room. The pump doesn't run every time you crack a faucet. Instead it fills this tank and pressurizes it, and the tank feeds your taps. Only when the pressure drops to a set point does the pump kick on to refill and re-pressurize, then shut off again.

That's why a working pump **cycles** — on for a bit, off for a while — rather than running constantly. And it's good news for backup: your generator doesn't have to run the pump every second, only during those refill cycles. It also means that right after the power dies, you've still got whatever pressurized water is in the tank — a little cushion, but not much.

There's one more wrinkle that matters for a generator: that pump motor takes a big **gulp** of power the instant it starts, far more than it uses while running. A page or two on, we'll see why that start-up surge, more than anything else, decides what size generator you need.

✓ Know your pump's basics

Somewhere you may have paperwork from when the well or pump was installed, listing the pump's horsepower and voltage. If you can find it, set it aside — it's exactly what we need to size a generator. If you can't, an electrician or well company can check it.

The 240-volt reality

Here's the single most important fact in this whole guide, and the one that surprises the most people: most well pumps need 240 volts, and the little generator you probably pictured can't make it.

Your home has two kinds of outlets. The regular ones on the wall are **120 volts** — lamps, the TV, phone chargers, the refrigerator. Big, hungry things like an electric dryer, a range, or a well pump often use **240 volts** instead, wired to their own special circuit. Most residential well pumps are in that 240-volt group.

Now here's the catch. The small, quiet, suitcase-style inverter generators most folks own — the wonderful ones for the fridge, lights, and phones — put out **only 120 volts**. They physically cannot run a 240-volt well pump. It's not a matter of being a little underpowered; it's the wrong kind of power entirely, like trying to run a diesel truck on gasoline.

This trips up a lot of good, careful people. They buy a nice inverter generator, weather a storm keeping the fridge cold and the phones charged, and only then discover it will not touch the well pump. It's nobody's fault — the units aren't labeled in plain English about this — but it's an expensive surprise.

So the rule for a well is simple: you need a **larger generator with true 120/240-volt output**. The next couple of pages cover exactly what that looks like and how to size it. And no — as we'll see — you can't get there by ganging two little 120-volt units together.

! Read the outlets, not just the watts

A generator can have plenty of watts and still be 120-volt only. Before you count on one for a well, look for a clearly marked 120/240-volt outlet, usually a round twist-lock. If it's not there, that unit will never run your pump, no matter how big it is.

Why two small units won't do it

A clever-sounding idea comes up a lot: 'I'll just hook two of my little generators together and get 240 volts.' It's a reasonable guess — and unfortunately it doesn't work that way.

Some inverter generators can be **paralleled** — joined with a special kit or cord so two units share the work as if they were one bigger one. It's a genuinely handy feature. You can buy one small quiet unit now, add a matching twin later, and run them together when you need more power.

But here's the part that matters for your well: paralleling two 120-volt units gives you **more 120-volt power — not 240 volts**. The two units sync up and combine their muscle, but they're still both pushing on the same single 120-volt leg. There's no second leg for them to make, so there's simply no 240 volts to be had. More watts, yes. A different kind of power, no.

So parallel is a fine answer to 'I want to run more 120-volt things' — a bigger fridge-and-lights setup, say. It is not an answer to 'I want to run my 240-volt well pump.' For that you need a single generator built from the start with true 120/240-volt output. No amount of pairing little units gets you there.

I mention this plainly because it's one of the most common and costly mix-ups I run into. Folks sometimes buy a second unit hoping to solve the well problem, only to find they've spent good money and still can't run the pump.

! The one-line version

Two 120-volt units joined together still make only 120 volts. A well pump needs a single, true 120/240-volt generator. Pairing does not create the second leg the pump requires.

What the right generator looks like

Once you know you need 240 volts, picking the right kind of generator gets much simpler. Here's what to look for so the unit can actually run your pump.

First and most important: **true 120/240-volt output**. On the front of the generator you want a clearly marked 240-volt outlet — commonly a round, four-prong twist-lock known as an **L14-30**. That outlet carries both 120-volt and 240-volt power, which is exactly what a whole-house or well-pump hookup uses. If a unit has only the flat household plugs, it's 120-volt only and won't do.

Second, **enough size** for the pump and its surge — we'll size it properly on the next page. In practice this means stepping up from the featherweight suitcase units to something larger. That can be a bigger **inverter** generator (quieter, cleaner power, usually costs a bit more) or a conventional **open-frame** generator (louder and rougher, but often more watts for the money). Both can run a well if they offer that 120/240-volt outlet.

For a well, either type is fine — the pump doesn't care about clean power the way a computer does. If the same unit will also run your electronics, an inverter's clean power is a nice bonus. If it's strictly for the pump and heavy loads, a conventional unit can stretch your dollar. It's a real trade-off, and I'm glad to help you weigh it.

The point to hold onto: for a well, you're shopping in a different aisle than the little suitcase generators. Bigger, with a 240-volt twist-lock outlet, sized to your pump. Get those three things right and the unit can do the job.

✓ Inverter or conventional — both can work

Don't let the word 'inverter' box you in. For a well pump, the must-haves are the 120/240-volt outlet and enough size. Whether it's a quiet inverter or a thriftier open-frame unit is a comfort-and-budget choice we can make together.

Sizing it for your pump

Two things drive the size of a well generator: your pump's horsepower, and the big surge it draws the instant it starts. Here's how to think about both, in general terms.

A well pump is a motor, and motors are greedy for a split second when they kick on. That **start-up surge** can be several times the pump's steady running draw — a brief, heavy gulp the generator has to be able to deliver, or the pump won't start. Sizing for that surge, not just the running number, is the whole trick.

Because every pump is a little different, the honest advice is to have yours checked. But as a rough, general guide: a common **half-horsepower to one-horsepower** submersible pump often wants a 120/240-volt generator in roughly the **4,000-to-5,000-watt class**. A larger pump, around **one and a half horsepower**, usually wants more — in the neighborhood of the **6,000-watt class**. Deeper wells and bigger pumps push the number up.

Those are ballparks, not promises. Your pump's exact horsepower, how deep the well is, and whether you'll run other things at the same time all move the target. That's why I'd rather have your pump looked at than guess — the number on a nameplate beats a rule of thumb every time.

And remember the surge point when you shop: generators list a **running** watt figure and a higher **starting** figure. For a well it's that starting figure that has to clear your pump's surge. A soft-start device, coming up next, can shrink the surge and sometimes let you use a smaller, quieter unit — well worth asking about.

★ Let's size it from real numbers

Bring me your pump's horsepower and voltage, or let me help you find them, and we'll land on the right size class together. I'd much rather spend ten minutes getting this right than have you buy a unit that can't start your pump. Call me at (330) 200-8042.

A soft-start can shrink the surge

If your pump's big start-up surge is what's pushing you toward a large, pricey, thirsty generator, there's a device worth knowing about that can ease it — a soft-start.

As we've seen, a well pump's heaviest demand isn't while it's running — it's the hard jolt the moment the motor slams on. A **soft-start device**, wired to the pump by an electrician, smooths that jolt. Instead of the motor grabbing its full surge all at once, the soft-start eases it up to speed over a second or two, so the peak the generator has to cover is much gentler.

Why does that matter for you? Because the surge is usually what sets the generator's size. Tame the surge and you may be able to run the same pump on a **smaller, quieter, less expensive** generator than you'd otherwise need. For folks who want an inverter unit for its quiet and clean power, a soft-start can sometimes bring a well pump within reach of a more modest one.

It's not magic and it's not always the answer — whether a soft-start makes sense depends on your particular pump and how much smaller a generator you're hoping to use. But it's a genuinely useful tool, and it's the kind of thing many folks have never heard of until someone points it out.

A soft-start is an electrician's install, not a do-it-yourself part, since it wires into the pump's circuit. The good news is that the same electrician who sets up your safe generator hookup can advise whether a soft-start fits your situation and put one in while they're at it.

✓ Ask the question before you buy the generator

Because a soft-start can change what size generator you need, it's worth asking about **before** you buy the unit, not after. Sizing the pump, considering a soft-start, and picking the generator all go together — that's exactly the kind of planning I'm happy to walk through with you.

Connecting it to the house, safely

Running the pump means getting the generator's power into your home's wiring — and that has to be done one particular, safe way. This is the part where a licensed electrician earns their keep.

Your well pump is hard-wired into your electrical panel; there's no plug to pull. To power it from a generator, you need a proper switch that connects the generator to that circuit while **keeping it separated from the utility lines**. There are two common, safe ways an electrician does this.

A **manual transfer switch** is a small panel the electrician installs beside your main one. It lets you flip chosen circuits — the well pump, the furnace, the fridge — over to generator power, and it physically prevents your generator and the utility from ever being connected at the same time.

A **panel interlock kit** is a simpler, often less expensive cousin. It's a sliding metal plate on your existing panel that makes it impossible to have the main breaker and the generator breaker on together. Paired with an **inlet** — a weatherproof outdoor socket you run a single cord to from the generator — it's a tidy, safe setup many homes use.

Either way, the theme is the same: a real, code-approved connection that keeps generator power and utility power strictly apart. That protects your home, and it protects the line workers out fixing the outage. This is licensed-electrician work — not because I'm being cautious for its own sake, but because getting it wrong is genuinely dangerous. I coordinate a good electrician for exactly this and handle everything else around it.

! Why the separation matters so much

If a generator can back-feed onto the utility lines, it can send deadly voltage down wires that crews believe are dead. A transfer switch or interlock makes that impossible. It's the entire reason this step is done by a pro and never improvised — more on the dangerous shortcut to avoid on the next page.

The one deadly shortcut to never take

There's a dangerous trick that circulates among well owners, and I need to be blunt about it because it kills people: never, ever back-feed your house through a dryer or range outlet with a homemade double-male cord.

The shortcut goes like this: someone makes or buys a cord with a **male plug on both ends** — one end into the running generator, the other into the 240-volt dryer or range outlet — to push power backward into the house. It's known as a **suicide cord**, and the name is not an exaggeration.

Here's why it's so deadly. With no transfer switch keeping things separated, that generator can send power **backward onto the utility lines** outside. A lineworker out restoring your power, believing those wires are dead, can be electrocuted by your generator. People have died this way. You could kill a stranger doing their job to help you.

It's a danger inside your home, too. Those exposed male prongs are **live** the moment the generator is on — a shock or electrocution risk to anyone who touches them. And back-feeding bypasses your home's safety breakers, which is a real **fire hazard** in the walls.

I know the shortcut is tempting because it looks cheap and quick. Please don't. A proper transfer switch or interlock with an inlet, installed by a licensed electrician, does the same job safely and legally — and it's a one-time cost that buys you a lifetime of not having to worry. There is no version of the suicide cord that is safe, and no storm urgent enough to justify it.

! This one is non-negotiable

Never connect a generator to your house through an outlet with a double-male cord. It can electrocute line workers, shock your family, and start a fire. The only safe way to power hard-wired things like a well pump is a transfer switch or interlock installed by a licensed electrician. If anyone offers to rig it the quick way, say no.

If you live in town: city and suburb

Here's the honest truth for most of my in-town customers in Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro, and Aurora: if you're on city water, this particular guide mostly isn't for you — and that's good news for your wallet.

On a municipal system, the city keeps the water pressurized for you. When your power goes out, the water keeps flowing — no pump of yours to run, no 240-volt worry, no water in the plan at all. That takes the single most demanding load right off your list, so most town homes can back up their essentials with a smaller, quieter, more affordable generator. If that's you, the sizing and basics guides in this series are a better fit than this one.

But don't tune out entirely, because there are a few in-town exceptions worth knowing:

- **Edge-of-town and newer suburban homes** sometimes still have a private well even with neighbors close by — worth confirming which you're on before you assume.
- **Some homes have a booster pump**, even on city water, to bring weak pressure up — especially on a hill or at the end of a long line. If yours does, an outage can drop your pressure, and that pump may be something you'd want to back up.
- **Shared or community wells** serve some small developments and clusters of homes. If you're on one, ask who's responsible for its backup power, because it may not be you — or it may.

And every town home, well or not, still wants a plan for what it **does** need in an outage: the refrigerator, the furnace blower, lights, phones, and the internet. That plan is worth making before the storm — it's just a simpler, smaller one than a well home's.

✓ Not sure if you're on a well?

It's worth knowing for certain. A well usually means a pressure tank in the basement and no water bill from the city for water. If you're not sure, I can help you figure it out in a quick visit — it changes your whole outage plan.

If you're in the country on a well

This is the heart of the guide, and if you're on a private well out in the townships — Atwater, Rootstown, Deerfield, Palmyra — it's written for you. Backing up the well is usually the whole reason a country home wants a generator, so let's pull the pieces together.

Everything in this guide comes down to four moves, and here they are in one place: **size the unit** to your pump and its surge, **connect it safely** through a transfer switch or interlock installed by an electrician, **consider a soft-start** to tame the surge, and **store water** for the gaps. Get those four right and you've got running water when the power's gone.

! 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.

So the shape of a country plan is clear. You're shopping for a larger 120/240-volt generator, not a little suitcase unit — sized, in general terms, to your pump's horsepower and its big starting surge. You're planning on a licensed electrician for the hookup, because the pump is hard-wired and the connection has to keep your power safely apart from the utility's. And you're asking whether a soft-start could bring the surge down enough to use a smaller, quieter unit.

Around here that planning pays off often. Our ice storms and summer thunderstorms can take the power for days, and a country home without water for that long is a genuine hardship — hauling water to flush, no showers, no easy cooking or cleanup. A well backup turns that ordeal into an ordinary inconvenience.

And whatever you land on for the generator, keep water stored too. Even the right unit takes a few minutes to start, and the pump only makes water once it's running. Belt and suspenders is the country way, and it's the way I steer folks.

★ This is exactly my kind of project

Sizing the unit, weighing a soft-start, coordinating the electrician, and getting your water flowing again — that's a country well backup done right, and it's one of my favorite things to help with. One friendly phone call and I'll walk the whole thing with you: (330) 200-8042.

The safety talk: carbon monoxide

A well generator is a bigger, fuel-hungry machine, and like every generator it gives off carbon monoxide — so even though you're focused on water, this one safety rule comes first, every single time.

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.

Beyond the pump: the rest of the house

Good news after all that seriousness: once you've got a generator big enough to run the well pump, it can usually handle most of your other essentials too. The hard part sizes the easy part.

A generator in the 4,000-watt class and up — the range a well pump lives in — has plenty of room for the everyday things a country home wants in an outage. So while the pump is the reason you sized big, you're not buying a one-trick machine.

Once the electrician's transfer switch or interlock is in place, you can pick which circuits to power. A typical country outage list looks like this:

- **The well pump** — the headline act, run in cycles as the pressure tank calls for it.
- **The refrigerator and freezer** — a real blessing if you keep a garden's worth of food put up for winter.
- **The furnace blower or a fan** — heat when it's an Ohio ice storm, air moving in a summer outage.
- **Lights, phones, and the internet** — enough to stay comfortable and hear the weather.
- **A medical device** like a CPAP, if someone relies on one — always a priority, with its own safe overnight setup covered in another guide.

You likely won't run all of it at once, and you don't need to. The well pump only draws power during its refill cycles, so much of the time the generator is free for everything else. A little taking-turns — the pump refills, then you run the coffee maker — stretches a modest unit a long way.

✓ The pump sets the size; the rest rides along

When you size for the well pump and its surge, you've usually got comfortable room for the fridge, lights, and heat. That's the quiet upside of the 240-volt requirement — the generous unit it forces you to buy takes good care of everything else.

Store water — the backup that never fails

Even with the perfect generator, storing water belongs in every well home's plan. It's the simplest, cheapest, most foolproof backup there is, and it covers the gaps a generator can't.

Here's the honest truth a generator can't get around: it takes a moment to wheel out, fuel, start, and switch over, and the pump only makes water once it's running. For the first stretch of an outage — and for the short blips not worth firing up the machine — stored water is what keeps you comfortable.

Two easy habits cover most of it:

- **Keep drinking water on hand.** Store a few days' worth of bottled or jugged water for drinking and cooking, and rotate it now and then so it stays fresh. A rough rule many use is about a gallon per person per day, more if you can.
- **Fill the bathtub when a storm is coming.** When the forecast turns ugly, run a tub full of water. You won't drink it, but a bucketful poured into the toilet tank flushes it just fine — and that one trick spares a lot of misery in a long outage.

It's worth keeping a clean bucket or two around for exactly that job, and a few extra jugs in the basement doesn't cost much or take much room. Think of stored water as the bridge that carries you until the generator's running, and the safety net for the times you'd rather not bother with it at all.

This is the page to hold onto even if you decide against a generator for now. Storing water is something every country home can do today, for almost nothing, and it works every single time — no fuel, no wiring, no surge to worry about.

★ Belt and suspenders

The country folks who ride out storms most comfortably almost always do both: a generator to run the pump, and water stored for the gaps. One covers the long haul, the other covers the moment. Together they mean you're never truly without water.

Test the whole setup before you need it

The worst time to discover a problem is a dark, freezing night with the power out. So once everything's in place, run the whole thing on a calm, sunny day — start to finish.

A well backup has several pieces that all have to work together: the generator, the cord, the transfer switch or inlet, and the pump itself. Each might be fine alone and still hit a snag when you connect them for real. A dry run on a good day finds those snags while they're just a puzzle, not an emergency.

Here's a simple test, once your electrician has the hookup installed:

- **Set the generator up properly** — outside, at least 20 feet from the house, exhaust pointed away, just as you would in a real outage.
- **Start it and let it settle**, then connect it to the house through your transfer switch or inlet the way the electrician showed you.
- **Switch the well pump circuit over** to generator power, remembering to let the engine spin up (eco mode off) so it's ready for the pump's surge.
- **Open a faucet** and confirm you've got water and steady pressure. Let the pump cycle once — run, then shut off as the tank fills — so you know the whole loop works.

If anything hesitates — the generator strains starting the pump, a breaker trips, the pressure seems weak — far better to sort it out now, in daylight, with time to call for help. Note how it all went so the real thing is just repeating a routine you've already done.

✓ Do a test run once or twice a year

Tie it to something you'll remember — the start of storm season, say. Run the generator, prove it starts the pump, and top up your stored water. Twenty minutes now buys real peace of mind when the sky turns green.

Running it when the power's actually out

When the real thing happens, a calm routine makes all the difference. Here's how a well backup usually goes, once you've done it a time or two.

Set the generator outside first — at least 20 feet from the house, exhaust pointed away, never in the garage or a shed. Start it, give it a moment to warm up and settle, then connect it to the house through your transfer switch or inlet exactly as your electrician showed you.

When you're ready to bring the pump on, **switch off eco mode** for a moment first if your unit has it. Eco mode lets the engine idle down to save fuel, but you want it already spun up and at full strength when the pump demands its big starting surge. Flip eco off, switch the pump circuit over, let it start, and once it's running steadily you can turn eco back on.

Remember your pump **cycles** — it runs to refill the pressure tank, then shuts off until the pressure drops again. So it won't draw power constantly, which leaves the generator free much of the time for the fridge, lights, and phones. A little taking-turns with the heavier loads keeps a modest unit happy.

Keep an eye on fuel and give the generator a rest to refuel as needed, always shutting it down first. And keep those carbon-monoxide alarms in mind — running outside, 20 feet away with the exhaust pointed off, is the rule that never bends, and it's the whole reason the machine lives outdoors.

✓ Write your own steps on a card

Once you and I (or your electrician) have run through it, jot the exact steps for your setup on an index card and tape it inside a cabinet. On a stressful night you'll be glad to just follow the card instead of remembering. I'm happy to help you write it.

How I can help

A well backup is a project with a few moving parts — picking the right generator, sizing it to your pump, deciding on a soft-start, and getting it safely wired in. Pulling all that together is exactly the sort of thing I do for folks around 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.

The 240-volt hookup itself — the transfer switch or interlock that ties the generator to your pump and panel — is a licensed electrician's job, and I'm a tech-help person, not an electrician. So I coordinate a good one for that part, and I handle the rest: helping you choose and size the unit, setting it up, teaching you to run it safely, and getting your water, internet, and devices 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 well-pump questions, answered

The questions I hear most from folks working out how to keep the water running.

Q: Can't I just run the pump off an extension cord?

No — a well pump is hard-wired into your panel, not plugged into an outlet, and it's usually 240 volts besides. Powering it means a transfer switch or interlock installed by an electrician, not a cord to a wall socket.

Q: Will two of my small generators make 240 volts if I pair them?

No. Paralleling two 120-volt units gives you more 120-volt power, never a 240-volt leg. A well pump needs a single, true 120/240-volt generator.

Q: How do I know what size I need?

It comes down to your pump's horsepower and its start-up surge. Ballpark, a half- to one-horsepower pump often wants the 4,000-to-5,000-watt class and a bigger pump wants more, but have yours checked to be sure.

Q: Would a soft-start really let me use a smaller unit?

Often, yes. It eases the pump's big starting surge, and since the surge usually sets the size, softening it can bring the pump within reach of a smaller, quieter generator. An electrician can tell you if it fits your pump.

Q: Is a generator enough on its own?

It's the long-haul answer, but pair it with stored water. A generator takes a few minutes to start, and the pump only makes water once it's running — so keep drinking water and a filled tub as your bridge.

Your well-pump readiness checklist

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

- ☐ Confirmed you're on a private well, and found or checked your pump's horsepower and voltage.
- ☐ Chosen a generator with true 120/240-volt output (an L14-30 twist-lock outlet), sized to your pump and its surge.
- ☐ Asked an electrician whether a soft-start device would let you use a smaller, quieter unit.
- ☐ Had a licensed electrician install a manual transfer switch or an interlock kit with an inlet.
- ☐ Never, ever a double-male 'suicide' cord back-feeding an outlet — the safe hookup only.
- ☐ A safe outdoor spot picked out, at least 20 feet from the house, exhaust pointing away.
- ☐ Working carbon-monoxide alarms inside, on every level, with fresh batteries.
- ☐ Tested the whole setup on a calm day — generator starts the pump, faucets run, pressure holds.
- ☐ A few days of drinking water stored, and a plan to fill the bathtub when a storm is coming.

Nine check marks between you and a country outage you can ride out with the water still running. Well done.

The short version

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

- On a private well, no power means no water — the pump can't run, so backing it up is often the whole reason for a generator.
- Most well pumps need 240 volts, and the small, quiet 120-volt inverter units can't run them — and two of them paired together still make only 120 volts.
- You need a larger unit with true 120/240-volt output, sized to your pump and its big surge; a soft-start can shrink the surge and let a smaller unit cope.
- The hookup — a transfer switch or interlock with an inlet — is a licensed electrician's job. Never back-feed through a dryer outlet with a double-male cord; it can kill line workers and start a fire.
- Store drinking water and fill the tub before a storm, test the whole setup on a calm day, and know I'm a phone call away.

Backing Up a Well Pump at a Glance

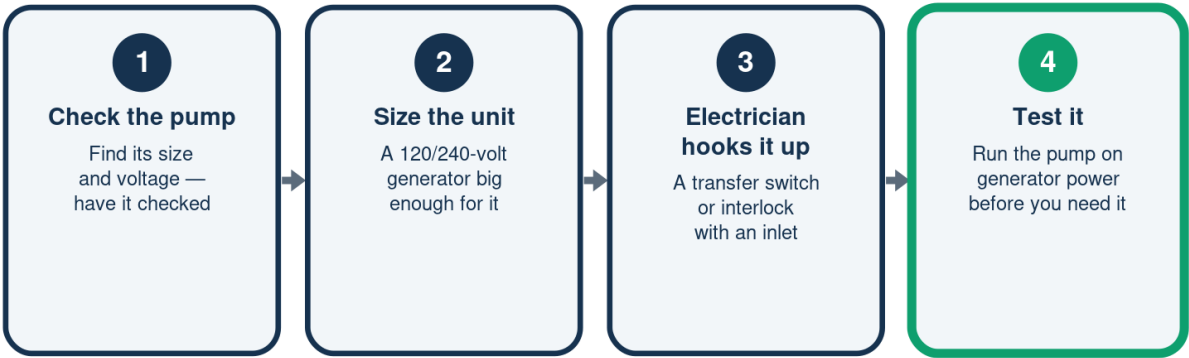
The plain-English version

	The short answer	Why it matters
The problem	No power, no water	The pump can't run
Most pumps	Run on 240 volts	Small 120V units can't
You need	A 120/240-volt unit	Sized to your pump
The hookup	A transfer switch	By an electrician
Also always	Store water too	Fill the tub first

No power means no water on a well — a bigger 120/240-volt unit, a safe hookup, and stored water keep it flowing.

Getting Your Well Backed Up

Four steps, done once



The pump sets the size; a licensed electrician makes the connection safe.

Will It Run Your Well Pump?

The little unit vs. the one a well needs

	A small suitcase unit	A well-ready unit
Voltage	120 volts only	True 120/240 volts
Your pump	Can't run it	Runs it, sized right
The outlet	Household plugs	L14-30 twist-lock
Size class	Small and quiet	Mid-thousands and up
Two in parallel?	Still only 120V	Not the answer

Two little 120-volt units joined together still make only 120 volts — never 240.

Will My Generator Run My Well Pump?

Start with what it puts out

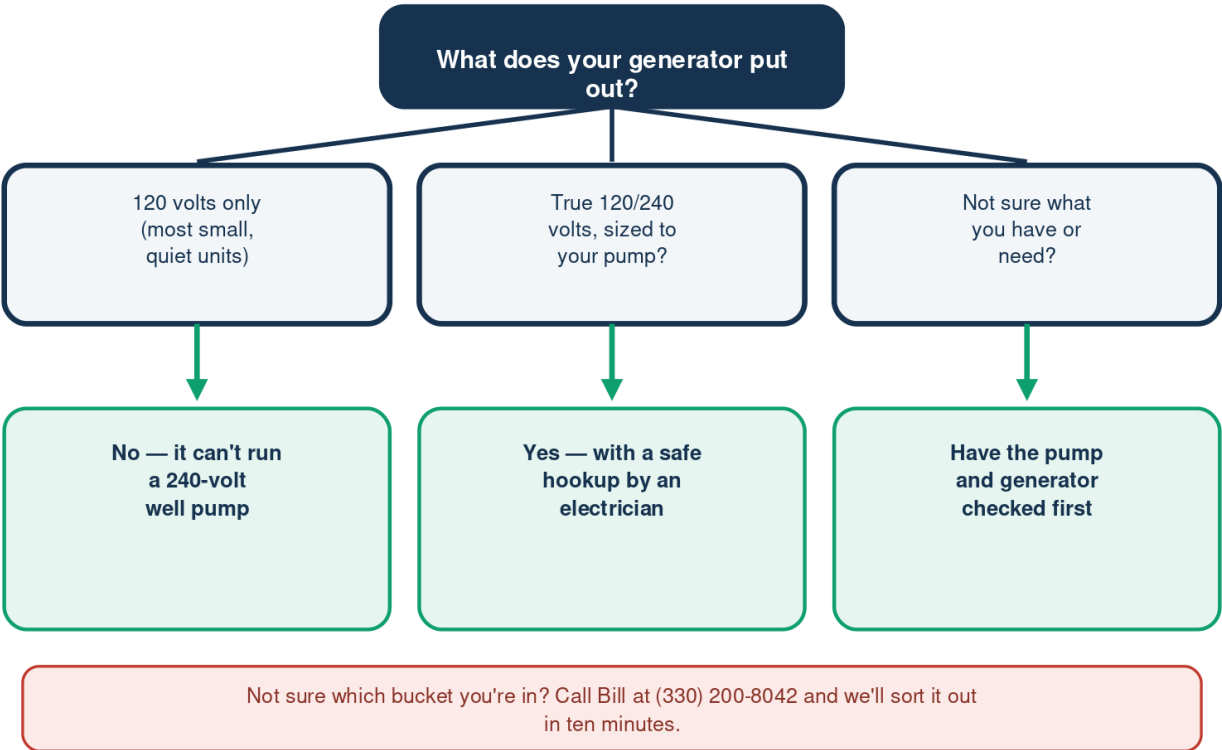


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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