



An Extended Guide · No. 1665

The Printable CO and Placement Safety Checklist

Everything on one set of
pages you can check off

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! Read this first — carbon monoxide is the real danger

A running generator's exhaust contains carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill in minutes. Never run a generator indoors, in a garage, in a shed, or on a porch, not even with the door open and a fan going. Run it outside only, well away from the house — the safety agencies say at least 20 feet — with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent. Put battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on each floor and outside the bedrooms. If an alarm sounds, or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone into fresh air first and ask questions later. This whole checklist exists for one reason: so the life-saving basics — outdoors, at least 20 feet away, exhaust pointed away, alarms on — never get skipped in a hurry when the power is out and everyone is rushing.

Everything on pages you can check off

This guide is a little different from the others. Instead of explaining the why at length, it gathers the whole category's safety into short lists you can print, tape up, and actually use.

I'm Bill. A lot of generator mistakes don't happen because someone didn't know better — they happen in the rush of a dark, stormy night, when a step gets skipped. A checklist is the simple cure for that. It carries the thinking for you, so a tired, hurried moment still ends safely.

So print these pages. Tape the ones you use most where you'll see them — inside a cabinet door, by the back door, near where the generator lives. When you want the reasoning behind any line, our other guides go deeper; this one just makes sure nothing gets forgotten.

★ Made to be printed, not memorized

You don't have to hold any of this in your head — that's the point. If you'd like help filling these lists in for your own home and taping them where they'll do the most good, that's a visit I'm always glad to make. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The 60-second version

If you read nothing else, read this page — it's the whole checklist in one breath.

- ❑ OUTDOORS ONLY — never a garage, shed, carport, basement, or porch, even with a door open and a fan going.
- ❑ AT LEAST 20 FEET from the house, measured to the nearest wall.
- ❑ EXHAUST POINTED AWAY from every window, door, and vent — yours and the neighbor's.
- ❑ CO ALARMS on every level and outside every sleeping area, tested and working.
- ❑ OIL CHECKED, cords sound, and only fresh, safely stored fuel.
- ❑ ADD LOADS ONE AT A TIME, and refuel only with the engine off and cool.
- ❑ IF AN ALARM SOUNDS or anyone feels sick: everyone out to fresh air, then call 911. Don't go back in.

! This is the list behind all the other lists

Every checklist in this guide is just this page, spelled out for a particular moment. If you remember only these lines, you've remembered the part that saves lives.

How to use these checklists

A quick word on making these lists work for you, so they end up used and not just filed away.

You won't use every list at once. There's one for setting up before storm season, a quick one for before every start, ones for during and after an outage, a carbon-monoxide alarm list, and a seasonal review. Each is short on purpose.

Print the pages, then tape the two you'll reach for most — the before-every-start list and the alarm list — somewhere you can't miss them. A cabinet door near the back door works well. Keep the rest with your home papers so they're there when you want them.

✓ Make them yours

Feel free to add a line in the margin for anything specific to your home — 'point exhaust toward the garden, not the Johnsons' window,' or 'spare oil is on the workbench shelf.' A checklist you've personalized is one you'll actually follow.

The one-page master checklist

If you tape up a single page, make it this one. It's the whole safety story at a glance.

- ☐ OUTDOORS ONLY — never a garage, shed, carport, basement, or covered porch, even with a door open.
- ☐ AT LEAST 20 FEET from the house, measured to the nearest wall — about three car lengths.
- ☐ EXHAUST POINTED AWAY from every window, door, and vent, including the furnace or AC fresh-air intake.
- ☐ DRY, LEVEL GROUND, with a safe, lit path you can reach in wind, rain, or snow.
- ☐ CO ALARMS on every level and outside every sleeping area — tested, and battery or battery-backup type.
- ☐ FRESH FUEL stored safely; oil checked; cords and outlets sound.
- ☐ ADD LOADS ONE AT A TIME; refuel only with the engine off and cooled down.
- ☐ IF AN ALARM SOUNDS OR ANYONE FEELS SICK: everyone and pets out to fresh air, call 911, and do not go back in.

! Eight lines that carry the whole category

Every other guide in this category exists to explain one of these eight lines in depth. Get these right and the dangerous mistakes simply don't get made.

Set-up checklist — before an outage

Do this calmly, in daylight, before storm season — so nothing has to be figured out in the dark.

- ❑ Pick a spot outdoors, at least 20 feet from every wall, and mark it so there's no guessing later.
- ❑ Confirm it's dry and level, with room to point the exhaust away from all windows, doors, and vents.
- ❑ Clear a safe, lit path to the spot — you may be walking out there in bad weather.
- ❑ Have the right outdoor-rated cords ready, or your panel hookup in place, so you never drag it closer to reach.
- ❑ Check the oil, and lay in fresh, stabilized fuel, stored safely away from the house.
- ❑ Install CO alarms on every level and outside every sleeping area, and test them.
- ❑ Walk the whole household through the plan before the power ever goes out.

✓ The calm list saves the frantic moment

Ten quiet minutes on a sunny afternoon spent on this list is what makes the night of the outage uneventful. It's the least glamorous page here and quite possibly the most valuable.

Before-every-start checklist

This is the quick one — under a minute — and it's the last check between you and a mistake. Run it every single time.

- ☐ Generator is outdoors, at least 20 feet out, on dry, level ground.
- ☐ Exhaust is pointed away from every window, door, and vent.
- ☐ CO alarms inside are working.
- ☐ Oil is checked and at the right level; cords and outlets look undamaged.
- ☐ Nothing is plugged in yet — start it with no load, then add appliances.
- ☐ Any fuel was added with the engine off and cool, and any spill wiped up.

! Never skip this one for a short outage

The temptation is to skip the quick check 'because it'll only be on for a bit.' Short runs cause CO tragedies too. The one-minute check earns its place every time you start the engine.

During-the-outage checklist

Once it's running, a few habits keep it safe for the whole outage, not just the first minute.

- ❑ Add appliances one at a time, giving the generator a moment between each.
- ❑ Refuel only with the engine off and cooled down — never while it's hot or running.
- ❑ Check now and then that the exhaust and cooling vents stay clear, including of drifting snow.
- ❑ Watch everyone for CO symptoms — headache, dizziness, nausea, or sudden sleepiness.
- ❑ Cycle your loads if you're asking for more than the generator can comfortably carry.
- ❑ Keep a flashlight and this checklist somewhere you can find them in the dark.

! The wind gets a vote all night long

A breeze that carried the exhaust safely away this afternoon can swing toward the bedrooms overnight. That's exactly why the alarms inside stay on and why you keep an eye out even after a good start.

After-the-outage checklist

A tidy shutdown keeps the generator ready for next time and keeps stored fuel from becoming a problem.

- ☐ Shut the generator down the way your manual describes.
- ☐ Let it cool fully before you move it, cover it, or put it away.
- ☐ Store any leftover fuel safely, or plan to use it up soon so it doesn't go stale.
- ☐ Note anything that needs attention — an oil change due, a worn cord, a low alarm battery.
- ☐ Put the cords away dry and undamaged, coiled loosely and ready for next time.

✓ The best time to note a problem is now

The moment you notice a frayed cord or a tired battery — right after an outage — is the moment to write it down and fix it. It's a lot cheaper than discovering it during the next storm.

Carbon-monoxide alarm checklist

Your alarms are the warning that reaches you inside when something drifts wrong outside. This list keeps them ready.

- ☐ One CO alarm on every level of the home, including the basement.
- ☐ One outside every sleeping area, close enough to wake a sleeping person.
- ☐ Battery or battery-backup type, so it still works when the power is out.
- ☐ Tested with the button — and it actually sounds.
- ☐ Within its lifespan — check the replacement date printed on the unit.
- ☐ Dated in your notes, so you know when batteries and the alarm itself come due.

! A plug-in-only alarm is dark when you need it

You run the generator because the power is already out — so an alarm that only works plugged in is asleep at the exact moment it matters. Battery-backup is not optional here. Our CO-alarms guide covers the how and where in full.

Seasonal and annual review checklist

Once or twice a year, a slightly bigger look-over keeps everything current — ideally before the season you'll actually need it.

- ❑ Change the oil and check the air filter and spark plug, per your manual.
- ❑ Refresh any stored fuel that's getting old, and top up your stabilizer.
- ❑ Exercise the generator so you know it starts and runs before storm season arrives.
- ❑ Test every CO alarm, and replace any that are near their printed date.
- ❑ Walk the placement spot again — has anything changed nearby, like a new vent, deck, or shed?
- ❑ Re-read the safety basics with the household, especially if anyone new lives there now.

✓ Hook it to the clocks

A simple trick: do this review when the clocks change, or at the start of your stormy season. Tying it to a date you already notice means it actually happens.

The quick placement check

Before you press start, five things decide whether the spot is safe. Run your eye down them like a pass-or-fail test.

- **Location:** outdoors, in the open air — no roof, no walls.
- **Distance:** at least 20 feet from the nearest wall, about three car lengths.
- **Exhaust:** pointed away from every window, door, and vent.
- **Ground:** dry and level — not a low spot that puddles in a storm.
- **Alarms:** tested and on, one on every level of the house.

! If one line fails, the spot fails

This isn't a list where four out of five is good enough. A single failed line — too close, exhaust aimed wrong, a dead alarm — is enough to make the setup unsafe. Fix it before you start.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The core checklist is the same in every yard, but a compact in-town lot and a rural place on a well each earn a few extra lines worth adding to your printed pages.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, the challenge is a tighter lot and closer neighbors. Your checklist gains a few lines about where 20 feet actually lands and about the windows next door — and it's worth a note on any local rules.

- Add: 'Measured 20 feet — and where does the exhaust drift? Check the neighbor's windows, not just mine.'
- Add: 'Only clear spot may be a side yard or toward the street, not the backyard I pictured.'
- Add: 'Check any local rules on placement or running hours before an outage, not during one.'
- Keep the before-every-start list especially handy — close quarters leave little room for a placement mistake.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, outages tend to run longer and help is farther away, so your checklist grows a few lines about reserves and about reaching the generator when the weather turns.

- Add: 'Stored water and a longer fuel reserve on hand' — a rural outage can outlast a single tank of gas by days.
- Add: 'Can I reach and refuel the spot safely in deep snow or mud?' — and keep that path clear.
- Add: 'Extra alarm batteries and a way to check on each other,' since responders are farther off.
- Lean on the seasonal-review list — a generator that runs hard for days needs its upkeep current.

★ Want a checklist built for your home?

Whether it's a compact in-town lot or forty acres, I'm glad to help you fill in these lists with the specifics of your own place, then tape them where they'll do the most good. Call (330) 200-8042.

Fuel: keep-on-hand and safe-storage checklist

Fresh fuel, stored safely, is what turns a generator from a yard ornament into ready backup power. This short list keeps both parts right.

- ❑ Keep only fresh gasoline, treated with a stabilizer — ethanol-free if you can get it, since it stores better.
- ❑ Store it in approved, sealed, labeled containers — never milk jugs or open bottles.
- ❑ Keep it away from the house and well away from any flame, pilot light, or spark.
- ❑ Store it cool and out of direct sun, and use it up within a few months.
- ❑ Keep only what you'll reasonably use, and follow any local rules on how much you may store.

! Fuel vapors travel to find a flame

Even a closed can gives off vapors, and those vapors can drift along the floor to a water heater or pilot light. Keeping fuel well away from every ignition source is the whole point of storing it safely — our maintenance-for-safety guide covers fuel care in more depth.

What to keep with the generator

Having the right few things on hand means a small snag never becomes the reason your setup goes wrong in the dark.

- ❑ The right outdoor-rated cords, or your panel hookup ready to go.
- ❑ A flashlight or headlamp — so 'it was too dark to see' is never why a placement went wrong.
- ❑ Fresh oil of the grade your manual calls for, plus a spare air filter and spark plug.
- ❑ Work gloves and a funnel, for clean and safe refueling once it has cooled.
- ❑ This checklist, printed, and kept somewhere you'll actually find it.

✓ A small kit, one box, by the generator

A single labeled bin — cords, flashlight, oil, funnel, gloves, and these pages — kept where the generator lives means everything you need is in one place when the power goes out.

Where to go deeper

This checklist is the short version on purpose. When you want the reasoning or the fuller how-to behind any line, here's where to look.

For why the distance and direction matter so much, and how to pick a spot, see our 20-foot-rule guide. For how many carbon-monoxide alarms you need and exactly where they go, our CO-alarms guide. For rain, snow, and running it in weather, our safe-placement-and-weather guide.

And for the one moment this whole checklist is meant to prevent — an alarm actually sounding — our what-to-do-if-the-alarm-sounds guide walks through it calmly, step by step, so everyone knows the plan before they ever need it.

★ The lists here, the details there

Think of this guide as the pocket card and the others as the full manual. If you'd like help pulling it all together for your home, that's exactly what a visit is for. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

If the alarm sounds — the short version

Keep this on the fridge. It's the emergency plan in four lines — our what-to-do-if-the-alarm-sounds guide covers it fully.

- ❑ Get everyone — and pets — outside to fresh air immediately. Don't stop to open windows or hunt for the cause.
- ❑ From outside, call 911 and say a CO alarm went off and whether anyone feels sick.
- ❑ Do a head count, and do not go back inside for any reason until responders say it's safe.
- ❑ Get a medical check even if symptoms fade, and don't restart the generator until the cause is found and fixed.

! Fresh air first — never go back in to check

That's the heart of it: out first, then call, and never step back inside to investigate. A low battery makes a single chirp now and then; a real alarm is loud and continuous — treat any doubt as the real thing and get out.

The mistakes these lists exist to prevent

Nearly every serious generator mistake is one of a small handful. Knowing them makes the checklist mean more.

- **The garage 'just for a minute'** with the door up — the most common fatal mistake there is.
- **A covered porch or carport** to keep it out of the rain — the roof traps exhaust.
- **Right outside a window** to keep the cord short — exhaust drifts straight back in.
- **A dead or plugged-in-only alarm** during the very outage it was needed for.
- **Dragging it closer** because the cord won't reach — get a longer outdoor cord instead, never a shorter distance.

! Every one is a skipped checklist line

Look closely and each mistake above is simply a line on these lists that got skipped in a hurry. That's the quiet power of a checklist — it turns 'I forgot' into 'I checked.'

Questions worth asking

A few plain questions that come up about using these lists.

Q: Can I really run all these checklists during a storm?

You don't run them all at once. The set-up list is done calmly beforehand, the before-every-start list takes under a minute, and the rest are short. Having them on paper is exactly what makes them quick.

Q: Which list matters most?

The before-every-start list — it's the last check between you and a mistake: outdoors, 20 feet, exhaust away, alarms on, nothing plugged in yet.

Q: Should my checklists differ from my neighbor's?

The core is the same everywhere. But a compact in-town lot and a rural place on a well each add a few lines — there's a page on that just back a bit.

Q: Where do I find the deeper how-to?

This guide gathers the basics into lists; our other guides explain the why and the how. The where-to-go-deeper page points you to each one by name.

★ There's no silly question here

If any line on these lists is unclear, that's worth a call before an outage, not during one. I'd far rather talk it through than have you guess. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks putting these lists to use, answered plainly.

Q: Is this checklist a substitute for the other guides?

No — it's a summary you can print and check off. For the reasoning and the details behind each line, our 20-foot-rule, CO-alarms, and safe-placement-and-weather guides go deeper.

Q: How far from the house, exactly?

At least 20 feet, measured to the nearest wall, with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent — yours and the neighbor's. When unsure, add distance.

Q: Do I need CO alarms if the generator has a shutoff?

Yes. The generator's shutoff protects the air right around the unit; the alarms inside protect the people in the house. You want both, always.

Q: What if I can't check off every box?

Then it isn't ready. A box you can't check is the list doing its job — fix that item first, rather than starting anyway and hoping.

! Print a fresh copy once a year

Paper fades, tape yellows, and homes change. Print these lists fresh each year — and any time a new generator, a new house, or a new household member changes your setup.

Print it, tape it, share it

A checklist only helps if it's where you can see it — and it helps someone else if you pass it along.

Print the pages you'll use, and put them where the moment happens: the before-every-start and alarm lists near the back door or the generator, the set-up and seasonal lists with your home papers. If you have family who run a generator too — especially anyone older, or new to it — hand them a copy. It's the kind of thing that's easy to mean to do and easy to never get to.

★ Happy to print a set with you

If printing and organizing paperwork isn't your favorite thing, I can help you get a clean set printed, filled in for your home, and taped up on a visit. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

If you remember only one thing

Out of all these lists, one line is the reason the rest exist.

Outdoors, at least 20 feet away, exhaust pointed away, alarms on. That's the line every checklist here is built to protect. Everything else — the fuel, the cords, the seasonal review — keeps the generator working. That one keeps the people in the house safe.

! Say it back to yourself

Outside only. Twenty feet or more. Exhaust away from every window and door. Alarms on every level. If a list ever falls in a puddle and you're left with nothing but memory, that's the part to keep.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made your generator's carbon-monoxide and placement safety feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't do the licensed electrical or gas work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Quick Placement Check

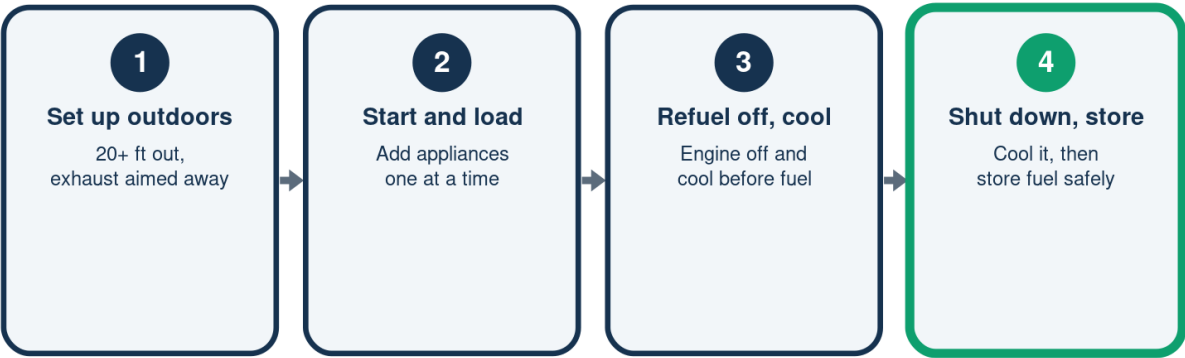
Run your eye down it -- pass or fail

	Check	Pass looks like
Location	Outdoors, open	No roof or walls
Distance	At least 20 ft	3 car lengths
Exhaust	Pointed away	Off all vents
Ground	Dry and level	No low puddle
Alarms	Tested and on	One per floor

If any one row fails, fix it before you start -- four of five isn't enough.

Outage Day, Start to Finish

The same order, every time



Start to finish in one order -- so no step gets skipped.

Alarm Checklist

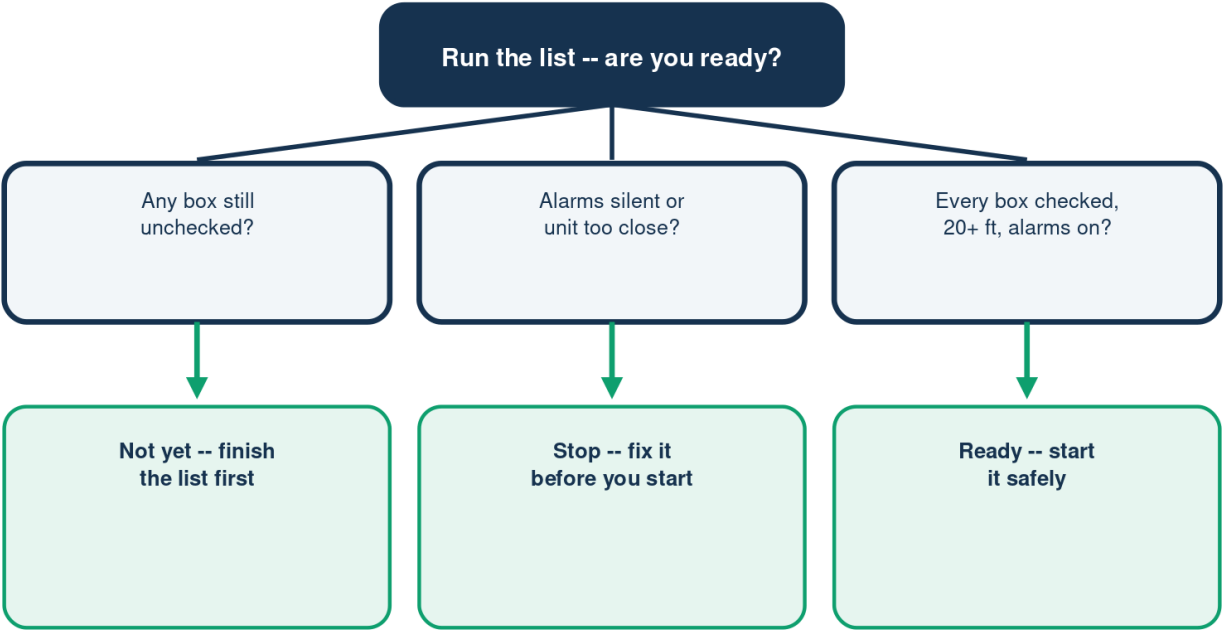
Your carbon-monoxide alarms at a glance

	Item	Done when
Coverage	On every level	One per floor
Bedrooms	Outside each	Can wake you
Power	Battery backup	On when dark
Test	Press to check	It sounds off
Age	Check the date	Not expired

An untested alarm is only decoration -- press the button.

Ready to Start Safely?

Let the checklist answer, not the hurry



When in doubt, treat it as not ready and run the list again.

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



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— Bill

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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*



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