



An Extended Guide · No. 1657

Hiring a Licensed Electrician for Your Generator

What to ask, and how Bill
helps you line one up

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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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. A good electrician makes the hookup itself safe — but the rest stays with you: you still run the generator outdoors, at least 20 feet away, with its exhaust pointed off and battery-backup CO alarms inside.

What to ask, and how I help you line one up

When a generator needs to connect to your electrical panel, that work belongs to a licensed electrician. This guide helps you find a good one and know what to ask — and explains exactly how I fit in.

I'm Bill, and I want to be straight with you from the first line: I'm a tech helper, not a licensed electrician. I do not do the licensed electrical work myself. What I do is coordinate and line up a trustworthy licensed pro for the panel work, help you plan everything around it, and then teach you to use it all with confidence.

So this guide is about hiring well. You'll learn why panel work needs a licensed pro, what licensed, bonded, and insured really means, the questions worth asking, the red flags that mean walk away, and how to compare quotes on more than price. Getting this part right makes everything else safer.

★ You don't have to vet strangers alone

Finding a trustworthy pro can feel daunting, and you do not have to do it by yourself. Helping you plan the job and line up the right licensed electrician is one of the most useful things I do. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The 60-second version

If you read nothing else in this guide, read this page.

- ❑ Any connection to your electrical panel — an interlock or transfer switch — needs a licensed electrician, for safety, code, and to avoid a deadly backfeed.
- ❑ Look for licensed, bonded, and insured, and confirm the pro will pull the permit as part of the job.
- ❑ Good questions: Are you licensed and insured? Will you pull the permit? Have you wired generator hookups before? Do you follow the code and use listed equipment?
- ❑ Walk away from anyone who suggests backfeeding or a suicide cord, won't pull a permit, or has no license or insurance.
- ❑ Get more than one written quote and compare the scope of work, not just the price.
- ❑ I'm a tech helper, not a licensed electrician — I coordinate a trustworthy pro and help you plan, but I don't do the licensed work myself.

! This page is worth reading twice

The heart of it: hire licensed and insured, insist on a permit, and walk away from anyone who suggests a dangerous shortcut. Everything else in this guide expands on those lines.

Why panel work needs a licensed electrician

This is not a case of being overly cautious. Connecting a generator to your panel is genuinely dangerous work if it is done wrong, and here is why.

When a generator ties into your panel, the wiring has to guarantee one thing above all: that the generator can never feed power back onto the utility lines. If it does — called backfeeding — it can put deadly voltage on lines that utility crews believe are dead, and it can surge back and start a fire or shock someone when the power returns. Preventing that takes proper transfer equipment, correctly wired.

There is also the matter of the neutral, the grounding, and how it all meets code — details that decide whether your protective devices work as they should. These are not guessing matters. A licensed electrician is trained and accountable for getting them right, which is exactly why this work is theirs and not a do-it-yourself project.

! Backfeeding can kill

A dangerous hookup does not just risk your home — it can kill a lineworker restoring power blocks away. That is the single biggest reason this work belongs to a licensed pro. Our [why-backfeeding-kills](#) guide explains it in full.

Where I fit in — and where I don't

Let me be very clear about my role, because honesty here matters more than sounding capable.

I do not do licensed electrical work. I will never wire your panel, install your transfer switch, or connect your gas. When someone tells you they can do all of that and they are not a licensed electrician, that itself is a red flag.

What I do is genuinely useful and sits right alongside the pro's work. I help you plan the must-run list and where the generator will sit. I help you understand the pieces so you can talk to an electrician as an informed homeowner. I coordinate and line up a trustworthy licensed pro. And after the work passes inspection, I help you learn to operate everything calmly and keep your CO alarms and storm routine in order.

★ I'm the helper, they're the licensed pro

Think of me as the person in your corner — planning with you, finding the right pro, and teaching you afterward — while the licensed electrician does the licensed work. That partnership gets you a safe job and a setup you actually understand. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

What 'licensed, bonded, and insured' means

You'll see this phrase everywhere. Here is what each word actually means for you, in plain terms.

- **Licensed.** The electrician has met your state's training and testing requirements and is authorized to do electrical work. It is the baseline for panel work.
- **Bonded.** There is a financial guarantee in place that helps protect you if the work is not completed or not done properly. It is a layer of recourse for you.
- **Insured.** The pro carries liability insurance, so if something is damaged or someone is hurt during the work, their insurance — not you — covers it.

Together, these three tell you that you are hiring an accountable professional, not someone working off the books. For work that ties into your panel, they are not optional niceties — they are the minimum you should accept.

✓ Ask to see it, and don't feel awkward

A reputable pro will not blink if you ask for their license number and proof of insurance. Asking is normal and expected. Anyone who bristles at a polite, standard question is telling you something worth hearing.

Good questions to ask a candidate

You do not need to be an electrician to hire one well. A handful of plain questions tell you most of what you need to know.

Q: Are you licensed and insured?

The answer should be a straightforward yes, with a license number and proof of insurance they are happy to share.

Q: Will you pull the permit?

Yes — a good pro expects to pull the permit as part of the job. Anyone who wants to skip it is a warning sign.

Q: Have you wired generator transfer switches or interlocks before?

You want real experience with generator hookups specifically, not just general electrical work.

Q: Do you follow the code and use listed equipment?

Yes — a pro should follow the relevant code, such as NEC 702.5 for transfer equipment, and install listed, approved gear.

Q: Can you give references and a written quote, and who handles the inspection?

Yes to references and a written quote, and the pro should handle the inspection as part of the permitted job.

★ Bring this list to the conversation

There is no shame in reading straight from a list of questions — a good pro respects a careful homeowner. If you'd like, I'll help you go through the answers together and tell you what sounds solid. Call (330) 200-8042.

Red flags — when to walk away

Just as important as the green flags are the warning signs. Any one of these is reason enough to keep looking.

- **Suggests backfeeding or a suicide cord.** Anyone proposing a male-to-male cord or feeding power through a dryer or range outlet is proposing something deadly and illegal. Walk away.
- **Won't pull a permit.** A pro who wants to skip the permit is skipping the independent safety check — and telling you how they work.
- **No license or insurance.** For panel work, this is not negotiable. No license, no job.
- **A quote far below everyone else.** A price that seems too good often means corners cut, no permit, or no insurance — it can cost far more later.
- **Pressure tactics.** Rushing you, a today-only price, or brushing off your questions are all signs to slow down and look elsewhere.

! Show them the door

If anyone suggests backfeeding, a suicide cord, or skipping the permit, that is your cue to end the conversation. This is not a person to negotiate with or give a second chance — it is a person to show the door. Your safety is not worth a discount.

Green flags worth trusting

It is not all about avoiding the bad. Here is what a genuinely good pro tends to look like, so you know it when you see it.

- **Licensed, bonded, and insured**, and happy to prove it without any fuss.
- **Expects to pull the permit** and treats the inspection as a normal part of the job.
- **Has wired generator hookups before** and can talk about interlocks and transfer switches plainly.
- **Gives a clear, written quote** that spells out the scope of work, not just a number scribbled on a card.
- **Answers your questions patiently** and never makes you feel rushed or silly for asking.

✓ Patience is a green flag

The way a pro answers your questions tells you a lot. Someone who takes the time to explain, without impatience, is usually someone who takes the same care with the work itself.

Getting more than one quote

For work like this, it is wise to get more than one quote — and just as wise to compare them on the right things.

Aim for a few written quotes rather than one. But resist the urge to simply pick the lowest number. Compare what each quote actually includes: the transfer switch or interlock, the inlet, the permit and inspection, any needed panel work, and cleanup. A higher quote that includes the permit and quality equipment can be the better value than a bare-bones lower one.

I won't put dollar figures on any of this, because prices depend on your home and your area — and honestly, the cheapest bid is often the one to be most careful with. What matters is comparing scope for scope, so you know you are weighing the same job, not a full job against a shortcut.

! Cheapest is not the same as best

A quote far below the others is a reason to ask more questions, not to celebrate. It often means something important — the permit, insurance, proper equipment — has been left out. Compare the scope, not just the bottom line.

What a good install day looks like

It helps to picture the day itself, so you know what a well-run job feels like.

A good pro arrives when they said they would, protects your floors and workspace, and explains what they are doing as they go. The work is neat, the connection is proper transfer equipment rather than any improvised shortcut, and the panel is left labeled and tidy. The permit is in hand, and the inspection is scheduled or already arranged.

By the end, the pro walks you through what was done and how it works. This is where I like to be involved too — so that once the electrician has finished the licensed work, you have someone patient to help you practice the routine until it feels easy.

★ I'll help you learn the ropes after

The licensed pro does the wiring; I help you live with it. After the install, I'll walk you through starting up, switching over, and shutting down calmly, as many times as it takes to feel natural. Call (330) 200-8042.

How I support you through it all

From the first thought to long after the install, there is a steady, practical role I play. Here is the whole arc.

- **Planning.** I help you build your must-run list and pick where the generator will sit, safely outdoors and well away.
- **Understanding.** I explain the pieces — inlets, interlocks, transfer switches — so you can talk to a pro as an informed homeowner.
- **Coordinating.** I help you find and line up a trustworthy licensed electrician, and I can sit in on the plan with you.
- **Learning.** After the work passes inspection, I teach you to operate everything and keep your CO alarms and storm routine in order.

A first in-home visit is a flat \$99, and much of the planning and learning can happen right there at your kitchen table. The licensed electrical work stays with the pro; the planning, the coordinating, and the patient teaching are mine.

★ One steady person through the whole thing

You get one friendly, familiar person to plan with, to help you hire, and to teach you afterward — so the process never feels like a stack of strangers. That is the role I'm glad to play. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Finding a good electrician looks a little different in town than out in the country, though what makes a pro good never changes.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, you usually have more electricians within easy reach, and permits run through the city or village. That makes comparing a few quotes straightforward.

- More pros nearby means it is easy to get more than one written quote and compare them properly.
- Permits typically go through the municipal building department, a process local pros handle all the time.
- Ask neighbors who have added generators — word of mouth on a good local electrician is worth a great deal.
- A homeowners' association may weigh in on placement, so mention it to your pro early.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, there may be fewer electricians nearby, so scheduling and travel can matter more — and experience with propane and well pumps becomes especially valuable.

- Fewer pros nearby can mean longer waits, so start looking well before storm season rather than during an outage.
- Ask specifically about experience with propane hookups and 240-volt well pumps, which are common out here.
- Permits may run through the county, and a pro who works that area will know the local process.
- Travel time may factor into a quote — fair enough, but still compare the scope of work, not just the total.

★ I know good local pros

Town or country, I can help you find and vet a licensed electrician who does this work right — and sit in on the plan so you are never negotiating alone. Call (330) 200-8042.

Myths people believe — and the truth

A few mistaken beliefs steer people toward the wrong pro. Here is the honest version of each.

Myth	Fact
'Any handyman can wire a generator hookup.'	Panel work needs a licensed electrician — it is about safety, code, and avoiding a deadly backfeed.
'The cheapest quote is the best deal.'	A bare-bones bid often skips the permit, insurance, or proper equipment. Compare the scope.
'A permit is optional if I trust the guy.'	A pro who skips permits skips the independent safety check. Insist on it every time.
'Backfeeding through a dryer outlet is a handy trick.'	It is deadly and illegal — it can kill a lineworker and start a fire. Never.
'Bill can just do the electrical work.'	No — I'm a tech helper, not a licensed electrician. I line up a licensed pro for that.

! When in doubt, trust the rule

Each of these sounds convenient in the moment, which is why they persist. When something you have heard doesn't match this guide, trust the rule, not the shortcut.

Checking references and reviews

A good pro will gladly point you to past work. A little checking gives you real peace of mind.

Ask for a few references — other homeowners the electrician has done similar work for — and actually call one or two. Simple questions work best: Was the work done on time? Was it neat? Did the inspection pass? Would you hire them again? You are listening for a calm, positive, specific answer.

Local word of mouth is gold, especially for something like a generator hookup. Neighbors who have been through it can tell you who did right by them. Online reviews can help too, but a real conversation with a past customer tells you more than a star rating ever will.

✓ One good reference call is worth a lot

It takes five minutes and can save you a great deal of worry. Most people are happy to tell you honestly how a job went. If you'd like, I can help you think through who to ask and what to listen for.

Common hiring mistakes to avoid

A few avoidable missteps trip people up when hiring. Knowing them keeps you clear of the worst outcomes.

- **Hiring on price alone** without comparing what each quote actually includes.
- **Skipping the license and insurance check** because someone seems friendly and confident.
- **Ignoring a red flag** because the price is tempting or the timing is convenient.
- **Letting yourself be rushed** by a today-only price or pressure to decide on the spot.
- **Assuming a general handyman can do panel work** that genuinely needs a licensed electrician.

! Slow down and check

Almost every hiring mistake comes from rushing. Take the time to check the license, compare the scope, and trust your gut on the red flags. The right pro is worth a short wait.

After the install — learning to use it

Hiring the pro is not the finish line. The real goal is a setup you can use calmly and confidently when the power goes out.

Once the licensed work is done and inspected, the most valuable thing is practice. Knowing how to start the generator, switch over safely, and shut it all down should feel like second nature — not something you are reading about for the first time in a storm at midnight.

This is the part I love. I'll walk you through the whole routine as many times as it takes, help you write out simple steps to keep with the generator, and make sure your CO alarms are tested and your storm-night plan is clear. A good hookup and a confident owner are what make a generator truly useful.

★ The install is step one, not the last step

A safe hookup is the foundation; knowing how to use it is the house you build on top. After your electrician finishes, that is exactly where I come in. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

How the electrician fits with the other pros

A generator install can involve more than one trade, and a good electrician coordinates smoothly with the rest.

For a panel hookup, the electrician is the key pro. If your setup involves gas — natural gas or propane — a licensed gas fitter or plumber handles that side, often working alongside the electrician. And a local inspector confirms the finished work. A good electrician is used to this and coordinates the timing so the pieces come together.

You do not have to manage all of that yourself. Our permits-and-inspection guide explains the inspection side, our transfer-switch-vs-interlock guide covers the hookup the electrician installs, and I can help keep everyone on the same page. This guide stays focused on hiring the electrician well — the pro at the center of it all.

✓ One coordinated job, not three separate ones

The smoothest installs happen when the trades talk to each other. A pro who is comfortable coordinating with a gas fitter and the inspector is a pro who has done this before — another quiet green flag.

Your hiring checklist

Here is the whole thing on one page — a simple checklist to carry through the hiring process.

- ☐ Confirmed the electrician is licensed, bonded, and insured, and saw proof.
- ☐ Confirmed they will pull the permit and handle the inspection.
- ☐ Asked about their experience wiring generator interlocks and transfer switches.
- ☐ Got more than one written quote and compared the scope, not just the price.
- ☐ Checked a reference or two, or a trusted neighbor's recommendation.
- ☐ Heard no red flags — no talk of backfeeding, suicide cords, or skipping the permit.

★ Go through it together if you like

If you'd rather not weigh all this alone, that is exactly what I'm here for. We can go down this list together, and I'll tell you honestly what sounds solid and what gives me pause. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks working through this guide, answered plainly.

Q: Do I really need a licensed electrician, or can a handyman do it?

For any connection to your panel — an interlock or transfer switch — you need a licensed electrician. It is about safety, code, and preventing a deadly backfeed, and it is usually a permit job too.

Q: Bill, can't you just do the electrical work?

No — I'm a tech helper, not a licensed electrician, and I won't pretend otherwise. I line you up with a trustworthy licensed pro, help you plan, and teach you to use it all afterward.

Q: How many quotes should I get?

A few is wise. Compare them on the full scope of work — permit, equipment, and all — rather than just the lowest number. The cheapest bid is often the one to question most.

Q: What is the single biggest red flag?

Anyone who suggests backfeeding, a suicide cord, or skipping the permit. That is not a pro to bargain with — it is a pro to show the door, no matter how good the price sounds.

! Hire safe, run safe

A licensed pro makes the hookup safe. The rest stays with you: run the generator outdoors, at least 20 feet away, exhaust pointed off, with CO alarms inside. The two together are what keep everyone safe.

Bringing it all together

Hiring a licensed electrician well is what turns a pile of equipment into a safe, working setup you can trust.

The essentials are simple: for panel work, hire licensed, bonded, and insured; insist on a permit; ask about real generator experience; compare quotes on scope; and walk away from anyone who suggests a dangerous shortcut. Get those right, and the hardest part of your install is in good hands.

This guide sits alongside its neighbors. Our permits-and-inspection guide covers the permit your pro will pull; our transfer-switch-vs-interlock guide covers the hookup they will install; and our why-backfeeding-kills guide explains the danger they are trained to prevent. Together they help you hire with confidence.

★ Let's find your pro together

I'll help you plan the job, find and vet a trustworthy licensed electrician, sit in on the plan, and teach you to run it all once it is in. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

If you remember only one thing

Out of everything in this guide, one idea matters more than the rest.

For panel work, hire a licensed, insured pro who pulls the permit — and walk away from anyone who suggests backfeeding, a suicide cord, or skipping the permit. A good electrician makes the hookup safe; the outdoor rule and the CO alarms stay with you. And you never have to find that pro alone.

! Say it back to yourself

Licensed and insured. Pulls the permit. Real generator experience. No dangerous shortcuts, ever. That is how you hire, and it is the difference between a setup that is safe and one that only looks finished.

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 hiring a licensed electrician 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

Questions to Ask an Electrician

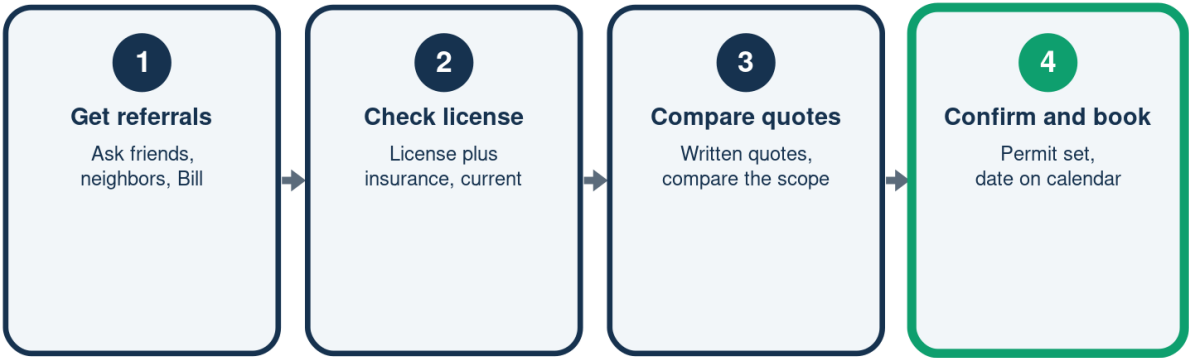
Plain questions, and the answers you want

	Ask this	A good answer
License	Are you licensed?	Yes, and insured
Permit	Will you pull it?	Yes, part of job
Experience	Done gen hookups?	Many, both kinds
Code	Follow NEC 702.5?	Yes, listed gear
References	Can I get some?	Yes, and a quote

Good answers are direct and specific -- vague answers are a warning.

Hiring the Right Pro

A calm, sensible path to a trustworthy electrician



Take your time here -- the right pro is worth the wait.

Green Flags vs. Red Flags

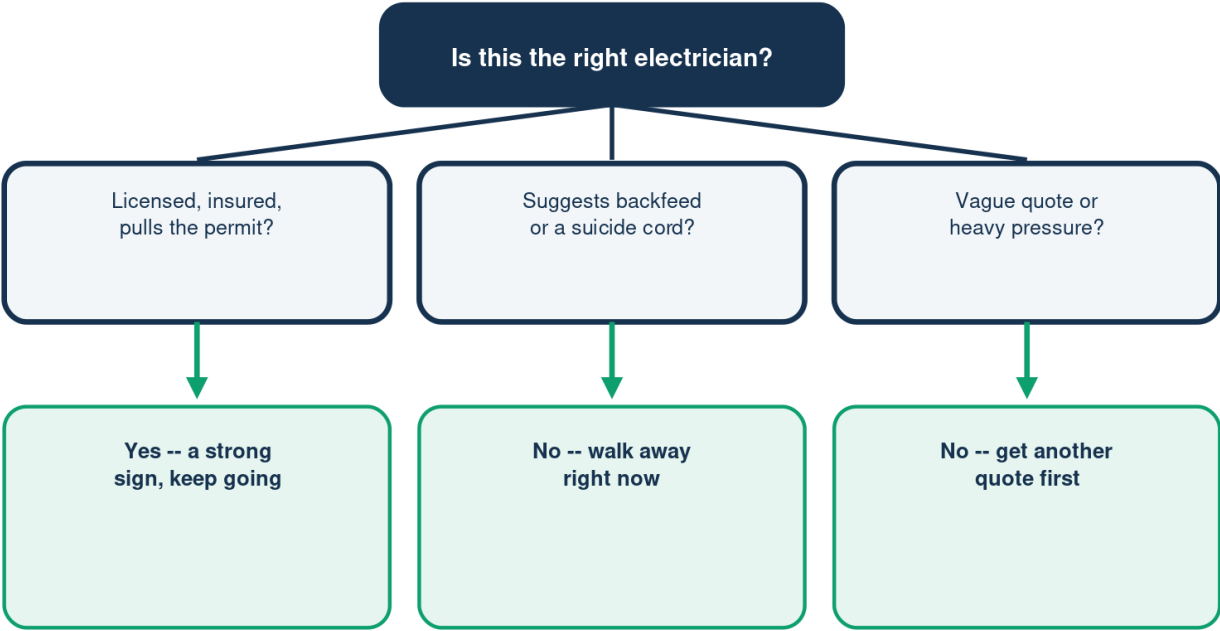
The signs of a pro worth hiring, and the ones to avoid

	Green flag	Red flag
Permit	Pulls it	Skips it
License	Licensed, insured	Neither one
Method	Interlock or ATS	Suicide cord
Quote	Clear, written	Vague, cash only
Manner	Patient answers	Pressure tactics

One red flag is enough to keep looking -- trust your gut.

Is This the Right Electrician?

Let the answers, not the price, decide



Anyone who says skip the permit or backfeed it -- show them the door.

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.

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— 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*



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