



An Extended Guide · No. 1655

The Inlet Box and the Generator Cord

The weatherproof link
between generator and panel

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

! 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. That is exactly what a good inlet box helps you do: it lets the generator live safely out in the yard, a full 20-plus feet away with its exhaust pointed away, instead of tempting you to run a cord in through a cracked window or door.

The weatherproof link between generator and panel

Once you decide to power more than a lamp or two, you need a safe, tidy way to get electricity from the generator out in the yard to the panel inside. That is exactly what an inlet box and a good generator cord are for.

I'm Bill. For 30-plus years I've helped folks around Portage County set up the gear in their homes, and this is one of those small pieces that makes a whole setup feel finished and safe. An inlet box is a weatherproof outdoor outlet on your house wall. A heavy cord plugs into it and carries power inside to your hookup. No open windows, no cord under the door, no fuss.

This guide walks through what the inlet box is, the heavy cord that feeds it, where the box goes, and who wires it. It leans on two ideas you'll see all through this category: keep the connection outdoors and dry, and keep the generator itself well away from the house.

★ You don't have to picture it all at once

If this feels like a lot, don't worry — by the end it will make plain sense, and you never have to memorize it. If you'd like a hand planning where your inlet should go, that's exactly the kind of visit I enjoy. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The 60-second version

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

- ❑ An inlet box is a weatherproof outdoor outlet on your house wall. A heavy cord plugs into it and feeds power to your hookup inside.
- ❑ It means you never open the panel yourself or run a cord through a window — the connection stays outdoors and dry.
- ❑ The generator cord is a heavy, outdoor-rated locking cord, matched to your generator's outlet on one end and the inlet on the other.
- ❑ The cord should be long enough to keep the generator a full 20-plus feet from the house, but not so long it becomes a trip hazard or drops voltage.
- ❑ A licensed electrician mounts and wires the inlet, tying it inside to your interlock or transfer switch — a permit job, not a do-it-yourself one.
- ❑ Keep the weatherproof cover closed when the inlet is not in use, and handle the heavy cord gently: uncoil it fully, keep the connectors up and dry.

! This page is worth reading twice

Everything else in this guide expands on these six lines. The inlet and cord exist to make the safe setup — generator well away, connection outdoors and dry — the easy setup too.

What a power inlet box actually is

Let's start with the box itself, because once you can picture it, the rest falls into place.

A power inlet box is a small, weatherproof outdoor outlet mounted on the outside wall of your house. It looks a bit like an outdoor receptacle with a hinged, gasketed cover. But instead of powering something plugged into the house, it works in reverse: it is the doorway that lets power from your generator come in to your panel.

Inside the wall, an electrician wires the inlet to your hookup — an interlock kit or a transfer switch at the panel. So the path is simple: generator, to heavy cord, to the inlet on the wall, to your hookup inside, to the circuits you have chosen to run.

The whole point is that this doorway is built for the job: outdoor-rated, weather-sealed, and wired properly, so power crosses into the house in one safe, dry, deliberate spot instead of through a window, a door, or an open panel.

✓ Think of it as a mail slot for electricity

A mail slot lets the mail in without leaving the door open. An inlet box lets generator power in without leaving anything open to the weather — one tidy, sealed spot made exactly for the purpose.

Why the inlet box exists

The inlet box solves two problems at once, and both of them are about safety.

The first is the window-or-door trick. Without an inlet, folks are tempted to run a cord in through a cracked window or a gap under the door. That pinches the cord, breaks the weather seal on your house, and often means the generator ends up too close because the cord has to reach an opening. The inlet ends all of that: the cord plugs into the wall, and the connection stays outdoors where it belongs.

The second is the panel itself. Without a proper hookup, some folks are tempted to open the panel or improvise a dangerous connection. You should never have to touch the panel or its wiring. The inlet, wired by an electrician to your interlock or transfer switch, keeps that connection permanent, sealed, and safe — so your part is just plugging in a cord.

! Never a shortcut through a window

A cord run through a window or door, or any homemade connection at the panel, is exactly what the inlet box exists to prevent. If your setup still relies on an open window, it isn't finished — and I'd be glad to help you get a proper inlet planned.

The heavy generator cord

The cord that runs from the generator to the inlet is not an ordinary extension cord. It is a heavier, purpose-built piece, and it is worth understanding in plain terms.

In general terms, it is a heavy, outdoor-rated locking cord. One end matches the outlet on your generator; the other end matches your wall inlet. The connectors twist and lock so they cannot shake loose or be pulled apart by accident. Your electrician and your generator's manual will tell you the exact type that fits your equipment — I won't guess at a part number here, because the right one depends on your generator and your inlet.

- **Outdoor-rated.** Built to sit outside in wet and cold weather while it works, not a light indoor cord.
- **Locking ends.** The connectors twist and lock so they stay seated and dry, even if the cord gets bumped.
- **Matched to both ends.** One end fits your generator's outlet, the other fits your inlet — they must match, so buy the cord to suit your gear.
- **Heavy enough.** Thick enough to carry the load you plan to run, so it doesn't overheat or waste power.

✓ Let the pieces choose the cord

The safest way to get the right cord is to match it to the generator you own and the inlet the electrician installs, rather than the other way around. When in doubt, ask the pro who wires your inlet to point you to the matching cord.

Why the cord's length matters both ways

Length is one of those things that is easy to get wrong in either direction, so let's think it through.

Too short is dangerous. If the cord won't reach, the temptation is to drag the generator closer to the house — and that is exactly backwards. This whole category rests on keeping the generator outdoors and well away, at least 20 feet, with the exhaust pointed away. The cord should be long enough to let the generator sit in its safe spot with room to spare, never the reason it creeps closer.

Too long has its own problems. A cord far longer than you need becomes a trip hazard underfoot, a tangle to store, and — on a long run carrying a real load — it can drop voltage, meaning your equipment gets a little less power than it should. The goal is a cord that comfortably reaches the safe spot and no more.

! The distance is the rule; the cord bends to it

If a cord won't reach your safe spot, get a proper longer one rated for the job — never move the generator closer to the house to make the cord fit. Our carbon-monoxide guide explains exactly why that distance is not negotiable.

Where the inlet box should go

The spot for the inlet is a small decision with a big payoff in convenience and safety. Here is what makes a good location.

- **On an exterior wall near the panel.** A short, direct path to your panel keeps the wiring run simple and clean for the electrician.
- **Reachable from the generator's safe spot.** It should sit where your matched cord can reach the generator out at its 20-plus-foot distance.
- **Up off the ground.** Mounted at a sensible height so it stays clear of puddles, snow, and splashing, and is easy to reach without bending low.
- **Weatherproof and accessible.** Somewhere it stays dry, out of the worst drips, and easy to get to in bad weather — not tucked behind a bush or blocked by clutter.

✓ Picture the whole path first

Before the inlet is mounted, picture the generator in its safe spot, the cord running to the wall, and the wiring going inside to the panel. When all three line up neatly, you have found the right place — and your electrician can confirm it.

Who installs and wires the inlet

This is the part I want to be very clear about, because it is where safety and the law both come in.

A licensed electrician installs and wires the inlet box. Inside the wall, the inlet connects to your hookup — an interlock kit or a transfer switch — which is what safely ties the generator into your panel without ever letting it feed back onto the utility lines. That connection involves the panel, the neutral, and code requirements, and it is genuinely a licensed electrician's job.

It is also, in almost every area, a permit job, with an inspection when the work is done. That is not red tape for its own sake — it is how you know the connection is safe, your insurance stays valid, and the work holds up when you sell the home. Our permits-and-inspection guide walks through what that looks like.

★ This is where I hand off to a pro

I'm a tech helper, not a licensed electrician. What I do is help you plan the spot, understand the pieces, and line up a trustworthy licensed pro to do the wiring — then help you learn to use it all afterward. Call me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll get it moving.

The cover, the gasket, and the label

A few small habits keep the inlet doing its job for years, dry and trouble-free.

- **Keep the cover closed.** The hinged, gasketed cover keeps rain and snow out of the inlet when it's not in use. Closed is its normal state.
- **Mind the gasket.** The rubber gasket is what makes the seal. Keep it clean and undamaged so water stays out.
- **Read the label.** The electrician should label the inlet clearly so anyone — including a future homeowner — knows what it is and how it is meant to be used.
- **Keep it clear.** Don't let mulch, plantings, or stored items pile up against the inlet. It needs to stay dry and reachable.

✓ A closed cover is a dry inlet

The single easiest habit here is to close the cover every time you unplug. A sealed, dry inlet lasts for years and is ready the moment the next storm rolls in.

Handling the heavy cord safely

That cord is thick and a little stubborn, which is exactly why a gentle routine matters — both for the cord and for your back.

- ❑ Uncoil the cord fully before you use it. A coiled cord under load can heat up, so let it lie out straight.
- ❑ Do not pinch it under a door, a gate, a tire, or a heavy object. Route it where nothing crushes it.
- ❑ Keep the connectors up off wet ground and out of puddles, so the locking ends stay dry.
- ❑ Seat the twist-lock ends fully and turn them to lock, at both the generator and the inlet, so nothing shakes loose.
- ❑ Inspect the cord before each use for cuts, cracks, or damage, and set it aside if anything looks wrong.

! Dry hands, dry connectors, seated locks

Electricity and water do not mix. Plug and unplug with dry hands, keep the connectors up and dry, and make sure the locking ends are fully seated. If a connector is wet or damaged, stop and sort that out first.

How the inlet pairs with your hookup

The inlet box is one piece of a set, and it makes the most sense alongside the guides for the pieces it connects to.

On the inside of the wall, the inlet feeds your hookup at the panel. If that hookup is an interlock kit, our interlock-kit overview explains how that plate works. If it is a transfer switch, our manual-transfer-switch overview covers that, and our transfer-switch-vs-interlock guide helps you weigh the two. This guide stays in its lane: it is about the outdoor link — the box and the cord — not the panel wiring itself.

And if you are only powering a few things with cords straight to appliances, you may not need an inlet at all yet. Our extension-cords guide covers that simpler path. The inlet becomes worthwhile once you want one clean, permanent connection instead of several cords.

✓ Read this one alongside its neighbors

You'll get the fullest picture by pairing this guide with the interlock-kit and transfer-switch guides. Together they show how the outdoor cord, the wall inlet, and the panel hookup form one safe chain from the generator to your lights.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The inlet and cord work the same way everywhere, but town lots and rural properties tend to call for slightly different choices.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, the panel is often on an outside wall or just inside the garage, so a neat, wall-mounted inlet near the panel usually falls into place easily. Space is tighter, so a tidy setup matters.

- A short cord run is often plenty — just long enough to reach the generator at its safe 20-plus-foot spot, and no more.
- Mount the inlet where the cord won't cross a walkway or the front step, so it is never a trip hazard for you or the neighbors.
- A clean, labeled inlet on the wall looks tidy and keeps you from ever reaching for the window-and-cord shortcut.
- Point the exhaust and route the cord with the neighbor's windows in mind, the same way you place the generator itself.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, the generator often parks well away from the farmhouse, so the cord run tends to be longer — and you may be running heavier loads, like a well pump, that call for more.

- A longer cord may be needed to reach a generator parked well away from the house — sized heavy enough for the distance and the load.
- If the well pump runs on 240 volts, the electrician may install a 240-volt inlet to match, so the pump can be powered through your hookup.
- With more room, it is easy to keep the generator far out with its exhaust pointed away — let the cord length serve that distance, not shorten it.
- Longer outages are common, so a rugged, weather-sealed inlet and a cord you can handle in the cold are worth getting right.

★ Every yard is a little different

Whether it's a snug in-town lot or a farm with the panel a long way from the safe spot, I'm glad to help you plan where the inlet goes and what cord fits. Call (330) 200-8042.

Setting up the connection when the power goes out

Once the inlet is installed, using it is genuinely simple. Here is the calm, ordinary routine.

- ❑ Set the generator in its safe spot outdoors, at least 20 feet from the house, with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent.
- ❑ Uncoil the heavy cord fully and plug one end into the generator's outlet, seating and locking the connector.
- ❑ Plug the other end into the wall inlet, seating and locking it, and make sure the connection is dry.
- ❑ Start the generator and let it settle, then operate your interlock or transfer switch exactly as your electrician showed you.
- ❑ When power returns, reverse the steps calmly: return the switch, shut down the generator, unplug, and close the inlet cover.

✓ Practice once on a calm day

The first time should not be in a storm at midnight. Walk through the whole routine once in daylight so it feels familiar. Five calm minutes now saves a lot of fumbling later — and I'm happy to walk it through with you.

Caring for the cord between outages

A cord that is stored well is a cord that is ready and safe when you need it. A little care goes a long way.

- Let the cord dry before you coil it for storage, so moisture is not sealed inside.
- Coil it loosely in wide loops rather than tight kinks, which can damage the wires inside over time.
- Store it somewhere dry and out of the sun, with the generator gear, so everything is together when a storm comes.
- Keep the locking connectors clean and capped if your cord came with covers, so grit stays out of the contacts.
- Look it over now and then, not just during an outage, so you catch any nicks or cracks early.

✓ Store it with the generator

Keep the cord, a flashlight, and your written notes right where the generator lives. When the power goes out, everything you need is in one place and you are not hunting in the dark.

Common mistakes to avoid

None of these are hard to avoid once you know them, and knowing them ahead of time is the whole point.

- **Running the cord through a window instead of using the inlet** — the very habit the inlet exists to replace.
- **Buying a cord that doesn't match** the generator's outlet or the inlet, so the ends don't fit or lock.
- **Moving the generator closer** to make a too-short cord reach, instead of getting a proper longer cord.
- **Leaving the connectors in a puddle** or on wet ground, where water can get into the locking ends.
- **Leaving the inlet cover open** after unplugging, so rain and snow get into the receptacle.
- **Coiling the cord while it runs**, which can let it overheat instead of lying out straight.

! Every one of these has a simple fix

Match the cord, keep the distance, seat and lock the ends, keep them dry, and close the cover. Do those, and the inlet-and-cord part of your setup is about as trouble-free as home tech gets.

Keeping the connection safe in bad weather

Storms are exactly when you'll use this setup, so it is worth a word about wet weather.

The inlet, the cord, and the connectors are all built for outdoor use, but built for weather is not the same as careless in weather. Keep the connectors up off wet ground, plug and unplug with dry hands, and make sure the locking ends are fully seated so water cannot work its way in.

The generator itself still needs its own protection — kept out of standing water, on a dry surface, under a proper running-rated open-sided cover if the manual allows, and never dragged into a garage or shed to escape the rain. Our guides on running in bad weather and winter placement go deeper there. The inlet just lets the safe outdoor setup stay outdoors.

! Never trade weather safety for CO safety

The temptation in a downpour is to bring the generator under cover that traps its exhaust. Don't. Keep it outdoors and well away, protect it the right way, and let the inlet and cord carry the power inside for you.

Myths people believe — and the truth

A few mistaken ideas come up around inlets and cords. Here is the honest version of each.

Myth	Fact
'A regular extension cord is fine for the inlet.'	The inlet needs a heavy, outdoor-rated locking cord matched to both ends — not an ordinary cord.
'A longer cord is always better.'	Too long trips you up and can drop voltage. Match the length to the safe spot, no more.
'I can wire the inlet myself to save money.'	The inlet ties into the panel — a licensed electrician's job, and usually a permit job too.
'If the cord won't reach, just move the generator in.'	Never. Get a proper longer cord; the 20-plus-foot distance is the rule.
'The cover doesn't matter if it's not raining now.'	Weather turns fast. A closed, sealed cover keeps the inlet dry and ready.

! When in doubt, trust the rule

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

Questions worth asking

A few plain questions clear up most of the confusion I hear about inlets and cords.

Q: What cord do I need for my generator and inlet?

A heavy, outdoor-rated locking cord that matches your generator's outlet on one end and your inlet on the other. Ask the electrician who installs the inlet, or check your generator's manual, rather than guessing at a part number.

Q: How long should the cord be?

Long enough to reach the generator in its safe spot, at least 20 feet from the house, with a little slack — but not so long that it trips you up or drops voltage. The safe distance sets the length.

Q: Can I install the inlet myself?

No — the inlet wires into your panel through an interlock or transfer switch, which is a licensed electrician's job and usually needs a permit. I can line you up with a trustworthy pro.

Q: Where is the best place for the inlet?

On an exterior wall near the panel, up off the ground, reachable from the generator's safe spot, and somewhere it stays dry and easy to get to. Your electrician will confirm the exact spot.

★ There's no silly question here

If any of this is fuzzy, I'd far rather you ask than guess. Reach me at (330) 200-8042 any time you want to talk through your inlet, your cord, or the whole setup.

Common Questions

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

Q: Do I really need an inlet box, or can I just use cords?

If you are only running a few things, outdoor-rated cords straight to appliances can be enough — see our extension-cords guide. An inlet becomes worth it when you want one clean, permanent connection to your panel instead of several cords.

Q: Does the inlet let me power my whole house?

The inlet feeds whatever your hookup is set up to run — the circuits your interlock or transfer switch controls. What you can run depends on your generator and that hookup, not the inlet alone.

Q: Is the inlet safe to touch in the rain?

The inlet and cord are built for outdoor use, but always handle the connectors with dry hands, keep them up off wet ground, and seat the locking ends fully. Keep the cover closed when it's not in use.

Q: Will the inlet work with any generator I buy later?

Only if the cord and inlet match the new generator's outlet. If you change generators, check that the ends still match, or have the cord updated. The inlet itself usually stays put.

! Keep it outdoors, keep it dry

However you connect, the two ideas never change: the generator runs outdoors and well away, and the connection stays outdoors and dry. The inlet and cord simply make that easy to do right.

Bringing it all together

The inlet box and generator cord are the weatherproof link that lets a safe outdoor setup stay safe and outdoors.

The box is a sealed doorway on your wall; the cord is a heavy, matched, locking line from the generator to that doorway; and a licensed electrician ties it into your panel through an interlock or transfer switch, with a permit and an inspection. Your part is simple: place the generator well away, plug in the cord, and use your hookup as you were shown.

For the pieces on either side, lean on their own guides — the extension-cords guide for the simpler path, the interlock-kit and transfer-switch guides for the panel hookup, and the permits-and-inspection and hiring-a-licensed-electrician guides for getting the work done right. This guide is the link in the middle.

★ Let's plan your inlet together

On a visit I'll help you pick the spot, picture the cord run, and line up a licensed electrician to wire it — then show you the simple routine for storm nights. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

If you remember only one thing

Out of everything in this guide, one idea holds it all together.

The inlet and cord exist so the safe setup is also the easy one: generator outdoors and well away, connection outdoors and dry, panel wiring left to a licensed pro. You never open a window, never open the panel, and never move the generator closer to make a cord reach. You just plug into the wall.

! Say it back to yourself

Generator well away, at least 20 feet, exhaust pointed away. Heavy matched cord, seated and locked, connectors dry. Inlet wired by a pro, cover closed. That is the whole idea, and it keeps a storm night simple and safe.

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 the inlet box and generator cord 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

Inlet Box: Why It's Better

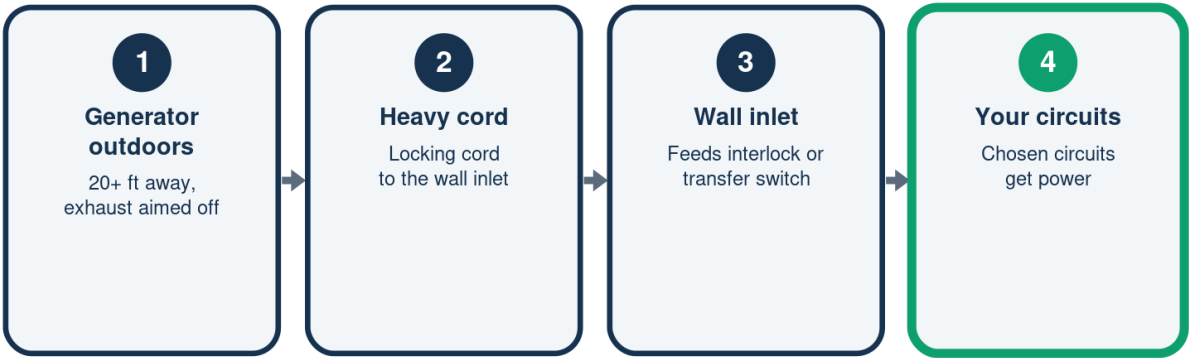
The weatherproof link, versus a risky shortcut

	Inlet box	Cord through a window
Weather	Sealed cover	Window gaps
The cord	Stays outside	Pinched shut
Wiring	Pro-installed	None at all
Each use	Just plug in	Rig it again

The inlet keeps the connection outdoors, dry, and wired by a pro.

How the Connection Works

One weatherproof link from generator to panel



A licensed electrician wires the inlet to your hookup.

Choosing the Cord

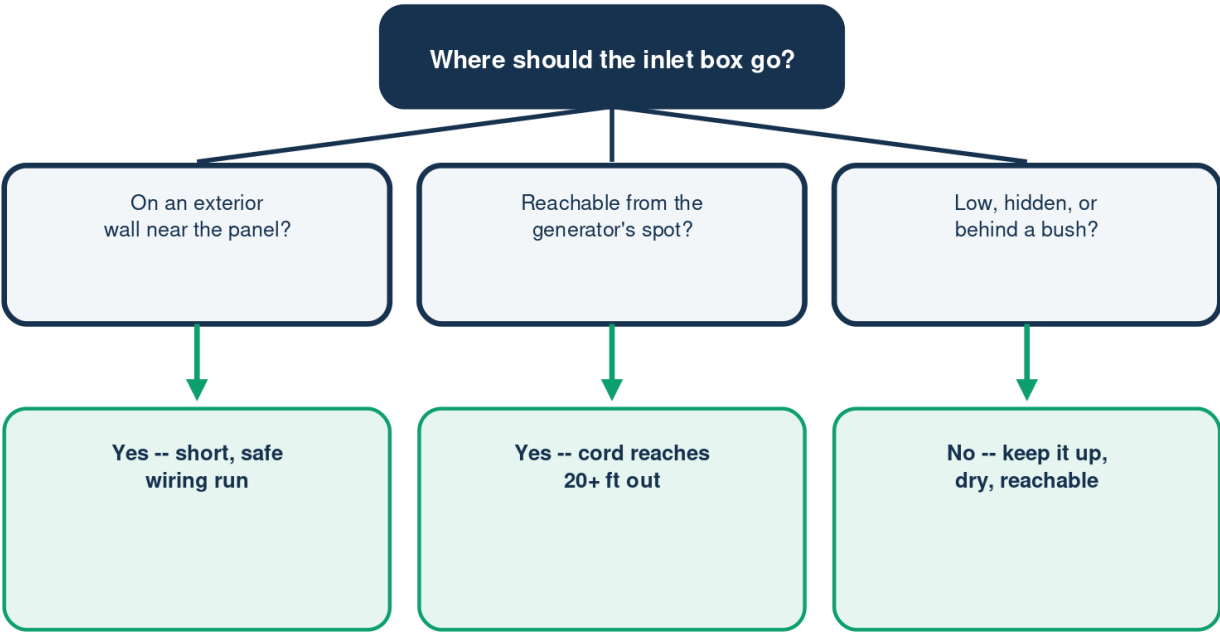
What to look for in the heavy generator cord

	Look for	Why
Rating	Outdoor-rated	Wet and cold
Ends	Locking twist	Won't shake out
Fit	Matches inlet	Plugs seat right
Length	Reaches 20+ ft	Keeps CO away
Gauge	Heavy enough	Carries the load

Match the cord to your generator's outlet and the inlet -- ask the pro.

Where Should the Inlet Go?

Let convenience and safety agree on the spot



A licensed electrician picks the exact spot and wires it to code.

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