



An Extended Guide · No. 1662

Protecting the Generator From Theft and Weather

Secure it and shelter it —
without ever trapping exhaust

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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. Never lock a running generator in a shed or box to secure it — security never overrides the outdoors-only, 20-foot CO rule.

Keep it safe — from thieves, from weather, and from itself

A generator is worth real money, it's easy to carry off, and it's most tempting to a thief on exactly the night you need it most. It also has to weather rain and snow. This guide helps you protect it on both fronts — without ever making the one mistake that turns a generator deadly.

I'm Bill, and in 30-plus years of helping folks with the gear in their homes, I've come to think of this topic as a balancing act. You want the generator secured and sheltered. You also want it breathing freely in the open air. The good news is you can have both — as long as you know which rule always wins.

That rule is simple, and it runs through every page here: neither keeping it from a thief nor keeping it out of the rain is ever a reason to box a running generator in or bring it indoors. Carbon monoxide doesn't care why the door is shut. So we secure and shelter it in ways that still let the exhaust escape to open air.

★ Let's set it up safe on both counts

Picking a spot that's secure, sheltered, and still safe to run is exactly the kind of thing I help with. If you'd like a hand at your own home, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The 60-second version

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

- ❑ Never lock a running generator in a shed, garage, or sealed box to secure it or shelter it — trapped exhaust can kill.
- ❑ Secure a running unit with a heavy cable or chain and lock to a fixed ground anchor or a bolted-down point.
- ❑ Use only a lockable enclosure that's vented or open so air moves freely — a cage that keeps hands off, not a box that traps exhaust.
- ❑ It still runs outdoors, at least 20 feet from the house, with the exhaust pointed to open air — security doesn't change that.
- ❑ Record the model and serial number and photograph the unit for police and insurance — keep those papers private, not on the machine.
- ❑ Good outdoor lighting deters thieves. When the engine is off and stored, then a locked shed or garage is perfectly fine.

! This page is worth reading twice

The whole guide balances on one line: secure it and shelter it, but never in a way that traps the exhaust of a running engine. Everything else here supports that.

The rule that beats every lock and every tarp

Before a single word about cables or covers, we settle the one question that outranks them all — because getting this wrong is fatal, not just costly.

A running generator's exhaust contains carbon monoxide, an invisible, odorless gas that can kill in minutes. That fact doesn't bend for any good reason. Locking the generator in a shed so no one steals it, or draping it and sealing it up so it stays dry, turns the space around it into a carbon-monoxide trap just as surely as running it in a garage would.

So the order of priority is fixed. First it has to be safe to run — outdoors, well away, exhaust to open air. Only then do we ask how to keep it from walking off and how to keep the rain off. Security and shelter are important, but they always work within the CO rule, never around it.

! A locked shed or box that traps exhaust can kill

This is the mistake this whole guide exists to prevent. Never lock a running generator inside a shed, garage, or sealed enclosure to protect it. No lock, no cover, and no thief is worth a life. Keep it outdoors and breathing, every single time.

Why generators get stolen during outages

Understanding when and why theft happens makes it much easier to prevent — without ever compromising on safety.

A generator is valuable, portable, and running out in the open, often overnight, at the exact time a whole neighborhood is without power and everyone knows who has one. That combination is why theft spikes during long outages. The answer isn't to hide it in a sealed space — it's to make it hard to grab and easy to see.

- It's running outside, sometimes for days, which is when it's most exposed.
- It's heavy but wheeled — a determined thief can roll it away quickly if it isn't anchored.
- During a wide outage, a running generator is easy to hear and spot from the street.
- The fix is a physical anchor, a lockable vented cage, and good light — never an airtight hiding spot.

✓ Make it a hard target, not a hidden one

Thieves look for the quick, quiet grab. A generator that's cabled down, caged, and lit up under a light is simply more trouble than it's worth — and it's still breathing safely in the open air.

Secure it with a cable or chain to a fixed point

The single most effective anti-theft step is also completely safe: tie the generator to something that isn't going anywhere.

A heavy security cable or chain and a good lock, run from the generator's frame to a fixed ground anchor or a solidly bolted-down point, defeats the quick grab-and-go that most outage thefts really are. None of this touches the exhaust or the airflow, so it costs you nothing on the safety side.

- Use a heavy, cut-resistant cable or chain and a quality lock — thin hardware is just a speed bump.
- Anchor to a fixed ground anchor, a bolted-down bracket, or another genuinely immovable point — not a light stake.
- Loop it through the generator's frame, not a handle or a wheel that can be removed.
- Keep the cable and lock up off wet ground where you can, and out of the exhaust's path.

✓ Anchor first, everywhere else second

If you do just one anti-theft thing, make it the anchor. It's cheap, it's fast, and it turns your generator from a two-minute theft into a job no opportunist wants.

A lockable cage that breathes — never a sealed box

You can add a lockable enclosure for extra security, but its design is where safety lives or dies. This page is the heart of the whole guide.

A good security enclosure is a cage: vented or open on its sides, built to keep hands and bolt cutters off the machine while letting air move freely all around it. Think of it as a strong fence around the generator, not a closet over it. The engine still needs to draw air and push its exhaust out into the open, exactly as if the cage weren't there.

What you must never do is enclose a running generator in anything airtight — a sealed box, a tote, a tight lockbox, or a locked shed. The moment air can't move freely, exhaust builds, and a security measure becomes a deadly one. And the cage doesn't change the basics: the unit still sits at least 20 feet from the house with its exhaust pointed to open air.

! If it can lock the air in, it's the wrong enclosure

That's the simplest test. A security enclosure for a running generator must breathe on every side. If closing and locking it would trap the exhaust, it's a coffin, not a cage — don't use it while the engine runs.

Write down the serial number and photograph it

If the worst happens, a little paperwork you did in advance is what gives the police and your insurer something to work with.

Record the make, model, and serial number of your generator, and take a few clear photos of the whole unit. A stolen generator with a recorded serial number can be identified and returned in a way an anonymous one never can, and your insurance claim goes far more smoothly when you can prove exactly what you had.

- Note the model and serial number — usually on a plate or sticker on the frame.
- Photograph the whole unit and any distinctive marks, and note where the serial number is.
- Keep those records private — with your home papers or in your phone, not taped to the machine.
- Check whether your homeowner's or renter's policy covers it, and keep the receipt if you have it.

✓ Do it once, keep it forever

This is a five-minute job you never have to repeat. Snap the photos and jot the serial number today, tuck them away, and they're ready if you ever need them.

Good lighting and visibility as a deterrent

Thieves prefer the dark and the hidden. A well-lit, visible generator quietly tells them to move along.

A generator that sits in a pool of light, where you and the neighbors can see it, is a far less appealing target than one tucked into a dark corner. Lighting also happens to make your own safe distance easier to keep — you can pace off the spot and check the exhaust direction even at night.

- Put the safe, well-away spot within reach of a light — a motion-sensor fixture is ideal.
- Keep the unit visible from the house and, where it helps, from a neighbor's view too.
- Avoid the temptation to hide it somewhere dark and enclosed — visible and open beats hidden and sealed, every time.
- A lit path also keeps you safe walking out to it in bad weather.

✓ Light is cheap security

A single motion light does double duty — it scares off the opportunist and lights your way to a generator that's safely out in the open. Hard to beat for the money.

Keeping rain and snow off — the safe way

Shelter matters, but it follows the same rule as security: keep the weather off without ever trapping the exhaust.

The safe way to keep a running generator dry is a cover built for the job — an open-sided, running-rated cover or canopy that sheds rain and snow while air moves freely underneath. Set the unit on a dry, raised surface so it isn't sitting in a puddle, and keep the exhaust clear of snow. What you never do is drape a tarp tight over it or bring it inside to escape the weather.

- Use an open-sided, running-rated cover or canopy — never a sealed wrap or a closed box.
- Set it on a dry, raised, level surface, out of pooling water.
- Keep the exhaust outlet clear of snow and never point it into a drift.
- Never move it into a garage, shed, or porch to get out of the rain.

✓ Our weather guide goes deeper

This is the short version. For the full picture on rain, snow, cold starts, and covers, see our safe-placement-and-weather-protection guide — it stays in that lane so this one can stay in its own.

Anchor the cover so the wind can't move it

A cover that blows loose in a storm is no help — and a cover that blows onto the machine can become a hazard. Anchoring solves both.

The same storm that knocks out your power brings the wind that wants to carry off a loose canopy. Secure a running-rated cover so it stays put and stays open on its sides — never let wind press it down tight against the machine, where it would start trapping exhaust and block airflow.

This is where security and weather thinking meet: the same care that keeps a thief from grabbing the unit keeps the wind from moving the cover. Anchor the generator, anchor the cover, and keep both arrangements open enough for the engine to breathe freely.

! A cover pressed tight is the same as a box

If wind mashes a cover down against a running generator, you've accidentally built the sealed enclosure this guide warns against. Keep covers open-sided and anchored, so they shed weather without ever smothering the exhaust.

Running versus stored — the rule changes

Here's the distinction that clears up most of the confusion: the enclosure rule is entirely about whether the engine is running.

While the generator is running, it must be outdoors and breathing — never sealed in, never locked in a shed or box, because it's making carbon monoxide the whole time. That's the rule the rest of this guide protects.

When the engine is off and cold and you're putting it away for the season or between uses, that same shed or garage becomes a perfectly good, secure home for it. A stored generator makes no exhaust, so locking it indoors is smart security, not a hazard. The line is simply this: enclose it to store it, never to run it.

! Off and cold indoors, running always outdoors

Say it that way and it's easy to remember. A silent, cold generator is safe to lock in the shed. A running one belongs outside in the open air, no exceptions, no matter how you're securing it.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Theft and weather look different in a close-packed neighborhood than they do on an isolated rural lot — but the safety rule is identical in both.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, you're in close quarters. A running generator is easy for a passer-by to spot and grab, but you also have neighbors who can keep an eye out. Small yards make placement tighter, so plan the safe, well-away spot with security in mind too.

- Anchor it — a quick grab-and-go is the main risk in a close neighborhood, and a cable defeats it.
- Lean on your neighbors as eyes, and keep the unit lit and visible rather than hidden in a dark side yard.
- On a small lot, find the spot that's 20-plus feet out AND anchorable — resist any urge to tuck it in the garage for safekeeping.
- Point the exhaust away from your windows and the neighbor's — close homes share air.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, you're more isolated. There may be no one nearby to notice a theft, the generator may run unattended overnight for days, and police are farther away. That's more reason to anchor and cage it well — and never a reason to lock it away while it runs.

- Anchor to something genuinely immovable — on an open rural lot there's little to slow a thief but the hardware you add.
- A lockable, vented cage earns its keep where a unit runs unattended overnight, far from watching eyes.
- Good lighting on the spot matters more when neighbors are distant — and it lights your own way out to it.
- Longer rural outages mean more overnight running, so keep it outdoors and breathing the whole time — never sealed in to guard it.

★ Town or country, let's secure it safely

Whether it's a tight in-town lot or an open rural one, I'm glad to help you pick a spot that's secure, sheltered, and still safe to run. Call (330) 200-8042.

Your secure-and-shelter checklist

Here's the whole safe setup on one page — pin it up where you store the generator.

- ❑ The running spot is outdoors, at least 20 feet from the house, with the exhaust to open air.
- ❑ A heavy cable or chain and lock tie the frame to a fixed ground anchor or a bolted-down point.
- ❑ Any enclosure is a vented or open lockable cage — never a sealed box or a locked shed while running.
- ❑ A running-rated, open-sided cover keeps rain and snow off and is anchored against wind.
- ❑ The spot is lit and visible, the serial number is recorded and photographed, and those papers are kept private.

✓ If a line fails, fix the setup — not the rule

If your only secure spot would trap the exhaust, the answer is a better anchor or cage out in the open, never bending the CO rule. The safe distance and open air come first, always.

The security mistakes that turn deadly

Every one of these starts as a sensible-sounding attempt to protect the generator — and ends somewhere dangerous.

- **Locking a running generator in the shed or garage** so no one can take it — the exact mistake that fills a home with carbon monoxide.
- **Sealing it in a box or tote** for security or weather, cutting off the air the engine needs.
- **Draping a tarp tight over a running unit** to hide it or keep it dry, trapping the exhaust underneath.
- **Tucking it in a dark, enclosed corner** to keep it out of sight, instead of lit and open where it's both safe and visible.
- **Skipping the anchor** and hoping, then over-correcting by hiding it somewhere it can't safely run.

! Protecting the machine must never endanger the people

Every mistake above trades a person's safety for the generator's. It's never a good trade. Anchor it, cage it, light it — and always leave it outdoors and breathing.

Storing it safely between uses

When the outage is over and the engine is cold, the rules relax — and a locked shed becomes a fine idea.

A generator that's off, cooled down, and put away makes no exhaust, so this is exactly when locking it in a shed or garage is good security rather than a hazard. Store it dry, with the fuel handled per the manual, and locked away from easy reach. Our maintenance guide covers the storage points — draining or stabilizing fuel and the rest — in more depth.

The only thing to watch is the handoff: never fire it up inside that storage spot. When it's time to run again, wheel it out to the safe, well-away spot first, then start it. Storage indoors, starting outdoors — that's the whole of it.

✓ Let the maintenance guide handle the fuel details

How you treat the fuel for storage — stabilizer, running it dry, keeping it fresh — lives in our maintenance-for-safety guide. This guide just reminds you: lock it away cold, never run it in there.

If it's stolen anyway: police and insurance

Even a well-secured generator can be taken. A little preparation makes the aftermath far less painful.

If your generator is stolen, that recorded serial number and those photos are what let you file a real police report and a clean insurance claim. Report it promptly, give the police the serial number, and check how your homeowner's or renter's policy treats it. Preparation you did on a calm afternoon pays off on a bad day.

- File a police report and give them the recorded serial number and your photos.
- Contact your insurer and ask how the loss is covered under your policy.
- Keep your records private — sharing a serial number publicly helps no one but a reseller.
- When you replace it, record the new serial number the same day it arrives.

★ I can help you get the records in order

If you'd like a hand finding and recording the serial number, taking good photos, or organizing your home papers, that's an easy visit. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Myths people believe — and the truth

A few sensible-sounding beliefs about security and shelter can lead somewhere dangerous. Here's the honest version of each.

Myth	Fact
'Locking it in the shed while it runs keeps it safe.'	It traps carbon monoxide and can kill. A running engine belongs outdoors, always.
'A tarp wrapped tight keeps it dry and hidden.'	It smothers the exhaust. Use an open-sided, running-rated cover instead.
'Hiding it in a dark corner stops theft.'	Dark and enclosed is both riskier and more tempting. Lit and anchored deters better.
'A little stake is enough of an anchor.'	A determined thief pulls that in seconds. Anchor to a fixed, immovable point.
'The enclosure rule is the same whether it's running or stored.'	It isn't. Sealed storage is fine when it's off and cold — never while it runs.

! When security and safety seem to disagree, safety wins

Every myth above tries to solve theft or weather by trapping the generator. When a security idea would trap the exhaust, it's the wrong idea — find one that works in the open air.

Questions worth asking

A few plain questions that clear up most of what folks wonder about securing and sheltering a generator.

Q: How do I stop someone from stealing it while it runs?

Anchor it with a heavy cable or chain to a fixed point, add a vented lockable cage, and keep it lit and visible — all while it stays outdoors and breathing.

Q: Can I put it in a locked box to keep it dry and safe?

Only if that box is vented or open so air moves freely. A sealed box traps exhaust and is deadly. For rain, use an open-sided, running-rated cover instead.

Q: Is it ever okay to run it in a locked shed?

No — never while it's running. A shed traps carbon monoxide just like a garage. Store it there cold, but always run it outdoors, 20-plus feet out.

Q: What should I write down in case it's stolen?

The make, model, and serial number, plus a few clear photos. Keep them private with your home papers so you can hand them to police and your insurer.

★ There's no silly question here

If you're unsure whether a security or weather idea is safe, ask before you try it — I'd much rather talk it through. Reach me at (330) 200-8042 any time.

Common Questions

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

Q: Doesn't securing it mean enclosing it?

No — securing means anchoring it and caging it so hands stay off, while air still moves freely. Enclosing a running engine in anything airtight is the one thing you never do.

Q: What makes a security cage safe versus dangerous?

A safe cage is vented or open on its sides so the engine breathes and the exhaust escapes. A dangerous one is sealed enough to trap that exhaust. If locking it would trap the air, it's the wrong cage.

Q: Can wind really turn a cover into a hazard?

Yes — if wind presses a cover down tight against a running unit, it starts acting like a sealed box. Keep covers open-sided and anchored so they shed weather without smothering the exhaust.

Q: When is it fine to lock it in a shed or garage?

When it's off, cooled down, and being stored. A cold generator makes no exhaust, so locked indoor storage is smart. Just never start it in there.

! Read it again if it's been a while

This guide is worth revisiting before each storm season, or any time you change where or how you secure and shelter your generator.

Bringing it all together

Every page here balances the same three things: keep it from thieves, keep the weather off, and never trap the exhaust of a running engine.

Anchor it to a fixed point, add a vented lockable cage, light it, shelter it under an open-sided running-rated cover, and record its serial number — all while it sits outdoors, at least 20 feet out, with the exhaust to open air. When it's off and cold, lock it away in the shed with a clear conscience.

For the pieces beyond this guide, our safe-placement-and-weather-protection guide covers rain, snow, and covers in depth, our guide on the 20-foot rule anchors the carbon-monoxide thinking, and the storage points in our maintenance guide handle fuel and off-season care.

★ Let's make it secure and safe together

On a visit I'll help you anchor it, choose a cage and cover that breathe, light the spot, and record what you'd need if it were ever stolen. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

If you remember only one thing

Out of everything in this guide, one idea has to come first.

Secure it and shelter it all you like — anchor it, cage it, light it, cover it — but never in a way that traps the exhaust of a running engine. No lock, no tarp, and no thief is worth a life. Keep a running generator outdoors and breathing, and save the locked shed for when it's cold and put away.

! Say it back to yourself

Anchor, don't enclose. Cage that breathes, never a sealed box. Running means outdoors and open air; stored means locked away cold. That's the balance, and safety always wins the tie.

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 protecting your generator from theft and weather 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

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Secure It Safely vs. Never

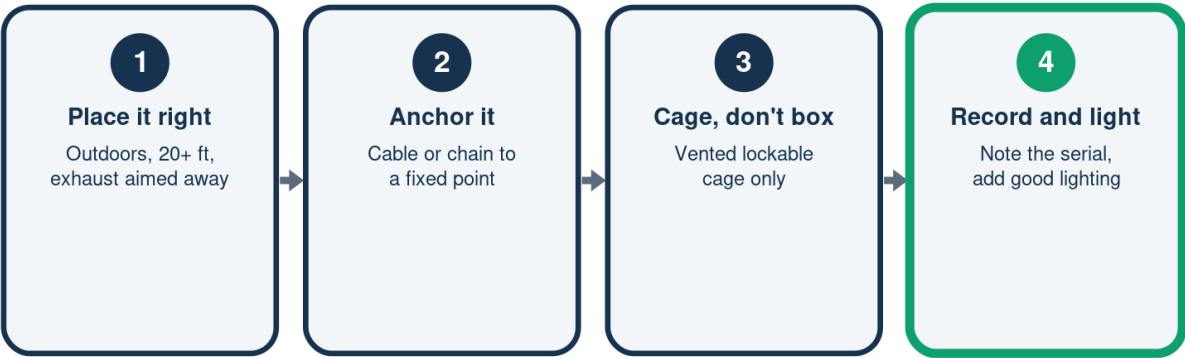
Lock it down without trapping exhaust

	Safe	Never
Anchor	Cable to an anchor	Left loose to grab
Enclosure	Vented lockable cage	Sealed box or shed
While running	Outdoors, open air	Locked indoors
Deterrent	Lit and visible	Dark and hidden

Secure it and shelter it -- but a running engine always stays outdoors and breathing.

Lock It Down the Safe Way

Secure it without ever trapping exhaust



Air must move freely on every side -- a lock never comes before the CO rule.

Running vs. Stored

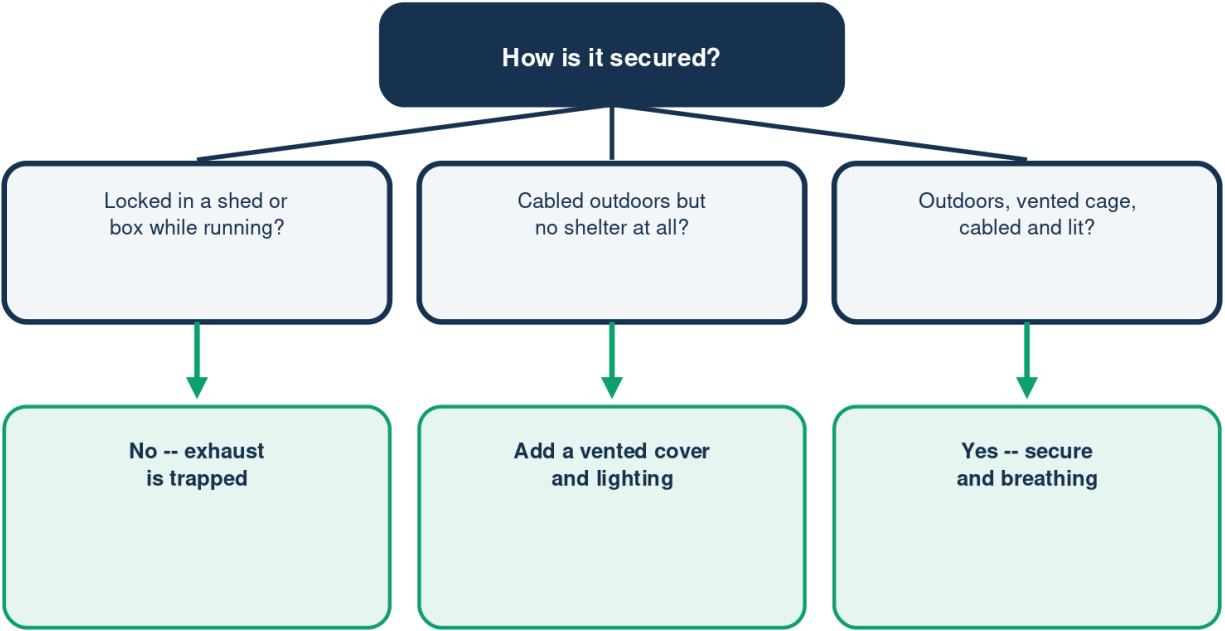
The enclosure rule depends on the engine

	Running	In storage
Location	Outdoors, 20+ ft	Shed or garage OK
Enclosure	Never sealed in	May be locked up
Exhaust	Open air only	Engine is off
Locking	Cable and cage	Lock the door

Enclose it to store it, never to run it -- a cold engine makes no exhaust.

Is This Security Setup Safe?

Let the CO rule have the final word



Security never overrides the outdoors-only, 20-foot rule. Air must move freely.

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



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

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— *Bill*



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