



An Extended Guide · No. 1241

Your Storm and Outage Game Plan

Ready before the lights go out

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. Everything in the plan ahead — before, during, and after — comes back to that one rule, so keep it in mind as the thread running through all of it.

Let's build your plan, before you need it

A generator is only as good as the plan wrapped around it. This guide ties together everything in our portable generator series into one calm, before/during/after game plan — so when the power actually goes out, you're following a plan instead of improvising one.

I'm Bill, and over 30-plus years I've seen the difference a plan makes. The folks who sail through an outage aren't the ones with the biggest generator — they're the ones who did a handful of ordinary things ahead of time.

Think of this guide as the hub of the whole series. Each topic here — sizing, fuel, safe hookups, the well pump, and more — has its own deeper guide to turn to. This one shows you how they all fit together.

★ Not sure where to start?

If the whole idea feels like a lot at once, call or text me at (330) 200-8042. I'll help you figure out which piece to tackle first for your home.

The whole plan, on one page

If you remember only these things, you're most of the way to being ready.

- ❑ Size and test your generator before you need it, not during the storm.
- ❑ Keep fresh, stabilized fuel stored safely, and rotate it.
- ❑ Run it outside only, 20+ feet away, with CO alarms on inside.
- ❑ Start with nothing plugged in, then add loads one at a time.
- ❑ Keep the fridge and freezer closed as much as possible.
- ❑ Cool it before refueling, and never add fuel while it's running or hot.
- ❑ After the outage, power down safely, store the fuel, and note the hours.

✓ Do the 'before' work in the next dry, calm week

Every item on the before-the-storm checklist is easier to do on an ordinary Tuesday than in the dark with wind picking up. Don't wait for a forecast.

Think in three phases: before, during, after

Nearly every generator headache comes from skipping the 'before' and improvising the 'during.' This guide walks all three.

Before covers everything you do on a calm day — sizing, fuel, the hookup, the alarms, the plan. During covers the outage itself, from setup to safe refueling. After covers wrapping up well so the whole cycle is easier next time.

None of the three phases is complicated on its own. Strung together, they're the difference between an outage that's merely inconvenient and one that's genuinely stressful.

✓ Keep this guide where you'll grab it

Unlike the deeper guides in this series, this one is meant to be your at-a-glance map. Keep it somewhere you'll actually reach for in the moment.

Before: start with the right-sized machine

Everything else in this plan assumes you're starting with a generator that actually fits your home.

If you haven't chosen one yet, our guide on how to choose a generator walks through the whole decision, and our sizing guide goes deep on adding up running watts and the starting surge. Read those first if this step isn't done.

If you already own one, confirm it's actually been tested under a real load, not just started and shut off. A generator you've never run under load is still an unknown quantity.

✓ Test it before the season, not during it

Pick a calm weekend once or twice a year to start it, run it under a real load, and confirm everything still works the way you expect.

Before: fuel, stored and fresh

A generator with no good fuel on hand is a very heavy paperweight.

Decide on gasoline, propane, or dual-fuel — our fuel-types guide compares them honestly. Whichever you choose, keep it fresh: stabilize gasoline and rotate it, or lean on propane's long shelf life if your generator will mostly sit and wait.

Store containers away from the house and any heat or flame, per our fuel-storage guide. Plan for the outage you expect, plus a modest, safely stored reserve.

! Stale fuel is the most common reason a stored generator won't start

If you only do one thing from this page, make it fuel freshness. It's the single biggest cause of a no-start after a long quiet stretch — our troubleshooting guide covers the rest.

Before: cords, the hookup, and CO alarms

Decide how the power gets from the generator into your home, and get your alarms in place, well before you need either.

For a handful of plug-in essentials, outdoor-rated extension cords may be all you need — our extension-cords guide covers picking the right gauge. For anything wired in, like a furnace or a well pump, a licensed electrician installs a transfer switch or interlock kit at your panel — our guides on connecting to the house, transfer switches, and interlock kits go deep on each.

Whichever hookup you choose, get it installed and tested well before storm season, not during it.

! Battery-backup CO alarms, on every level, tested

This is non-negotiable, and it costs little. Our carbon-monoxide safety guide covers exactly where to put them and how to test them — do it this week if you haven't.

Before: write your must-run list down

The single most useful piece of paper in this whole plan.

Walk your home and write down what you'd actually want running in a multi-day outage — the fridge, some lights, the furnace blower, medical equipment, a sump or well pump. Our sizing guide shows how this list is what determines the generator size you need in the first place.

- Keep the list realistic — everything at once is rarely necessary or possible.
- Note which items have a motor (they need a bigger starting surge) and which don't.
- Update it if your household or equipment changes.
- Keep a copy with the generator, not just in your head.

✓ Text me a photo of your list

If you'd like a second opinion on whether your generator (or the one you're considering) can actually cover your list, send me a photo. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Before: water, medical equipment, and food

A few extra plans that matter most for specific households — read the parts that apply to you.

If you're on a private well, water stops when the power does. Store drinking water and plan for a generator with the surge to run the pump — our well-pump guide goes deep on sizing for that specific job.

If anyone in your home depends on powered medical equipment, treat the generator as one layer of a bigger plan, not the whole plan — keep manufacturer-approved battery backups charged, register with your utility's medical priority list, and talk to your equipment supplier about your plan.

For food safety, our fridge-and-freezer guide covers exactly how long things stay safe with the doors closed, and how to cycle the generator between the two.

★ Medical equipment deserves its own conversation

If someone in your home relies on powered medical equipment, I'm glad to help you think through the backup plan and the safe hookup — call (330) 200-8042. I don't give medical advice, but I can help with the power side of it.

The complete before-the-storm checklist

Work through this once, then simply maintain it season to season.

- ☐ Generator is right-sized and has been tested under a real load.
- ☐ Fuel is fresh, stabilized or rotated, and stored safely.
- ☐ Cords are outdoor-rated and the right gauge, or the hookup is installed.
- ☐ CO alarms are in place on every level and tested.
- ☐ A written must-run list is up to date and kept with the generator.
- ☐ Well-water households have stored drinking water.
- ☐ Any medical equipment has its own battery-backup plan.
- ☐ Everyone in the house knows the outdoor-only rule.

✓ Do this on a calm weekend, not during a warning

Every box on this list is easier to check on an ordinary day. That's the whole point of doing it now.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The plan's bones are the same everywhere. What changes is how much rides on getting it right.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, outages tend to be shorter and help is closer, which makes this plan more about comfort and convenience than survival.

- A smaller, quieter generator and a modest fuel plan usually cover a typical outage comfortably.
- Cords or a modest interlock hookup are often all you need.
- A shorter expected outage still deserves the same before-the-storm checklist — just a smaller fuel reserve.
- Consider your neighbors when you set up — noise and exhaust direction matter in close quarters.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out on a well, this plan carries more weight — no power can mean no water, and outages often run longer past the last mile of line.

- Size for the well pump's surge and plan a bigger fuel reserve for longer outages.
- Store more drinking water than you think you'll need.
- A transfer switch or interlock, sized for the pump and the furnace together, is usually worth the investment.
- Keep a small spares kit on hand, since help and parts are farther away.

★ Let's build the plan for your specific home

Town or country, the right plan depends on your setup and your outages. Tell me about your home and I'll help you fill in the gaps. Call (330) 200-8042.

During: set it up safely, every single time

The moment the power goes out, this is the routine to fall back on.

Set the generator up outside only, at least 20 feet from the house, with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent — yours and the neighbor's. Never in a garage, shed, carport, basement, or on a porch, even with a door open.

Confirm your carbon-monoxide alarms are on and working the same way you would any night — they should already be tested and in place from your before-the-storm checklist. Our carbon-monoxide safety guide covers this in full detail.

! This is the one rule that matters most

Everything else in this plan is about comfort and convenience. This one is about staying alive. Outside, far away, exhaust pointed away — no exceptions, ever.

During: starting it right

How you start it shapes how smoothly the rest of the outage goes.

Start the generator with nothing plugged in. Let it settle into a steady run for a minute, then add your loads one at a time, heaviest motor first if you can — the fridge or the furnace blower, say — so each motor gets its full starting surge without competing for power.

If something struggles to start, unplug it and everything else, confirm the generator is running cleanly on its own, then try again one at a time. Our troubleshooting guide can help if something more than that seems off.

✓ Keep your must-run list handy

This is the moment your written list earns its keep — work down it calmly instead of trying to remember everything at once.

During: refueling and cycling loads

Two habits that keep a long outage running smoothly and safely.

Always turn the generator off and let it cool before refueling — spilled fuel on a hot engine can ignite. Refuel outdoors, away from any flame, wipe up spills, and don't overfill.

If your generator can't comfortably run everything on your list at once, cycle loads instead — run the fridge for a while, then switch to the freezer, then to charging devices. Our fridge-and-freezer guide covers how long each stays safely cold with the doors closed.

! Never add fuel while it's running or hot

This bears repeating during an actual outage, when it's tempting to top off quickly without shutting down. Always stop, and always let it cool first.

During: keeping the household together

An outage is as much about people as it is about power.

- Agree ahead of time on who checks the generator, who checks on the fridge and freezer, and who checks in with neighbors — especially those who are older or live alone.
- Keep the fridge and freezer doors closed as much as possible; every opening lets the cold out faster.
- Keep kids and pets away from the generator itself — it's hot, loud, and not a place for curious hands.
- If cell service allows, a quick check-in text with family lets everyone know the plan is working.

✓ A short family conversation now saves confusion later

Walk through the plan with whoever else is in the house before an outage happens, not during one. Everyone knowing the basics means you're not the only one who can run it.

A simple rhythm for a longer outage

For an outage that stretches past a few hours, this rough rhythm helps.

Roughly how often	What to check
Every couple of hours	Fuel level, and that everything sounds normal
Every few hours	Rotate which loads are running, if cycling
Once or twice a day	CO alarms are still working, oil looks fine
At refueling	Off and cool first, every time

✓ **Write the start time down somewhere**

Knowing exactly when the power went out — and when the generator started — makes food-safety and fuel-planning decisions much easier later.

After: powering down and cooling off

Once utility power is back, wrap up in an order that protects both you and the generator.

Turn off and unplug your loads before shutting the generator down, rather than killing it under load. Let it cool fully before you touch it, store it, or refuel it for next time.

If you were using a transfer switch or interlock, follow your electrician's instructions for switching back to utility power in the right order.

✓ No rush to put it away

Let it cool completely and wipe it down before rolling it back to storage. A few extra minutes here is easier than dealing with a damp, hot generator put away in a hurry.

After: storing fuel and noting maintenance

The outage is over, but a couple of small steps now save trouble next time.

Decide what to do with any leftover fuel — stabilize it for the next stretch of storage, or use it up in the generator during a future exercise run. Our storage guide covers stabilizing versus running the tank dry in full.

Jot down the hours run, or note the date, and glance over the oil and air filter for anything that looked off during the outage. Our maintenance guide covers the full ongoing schedule — this is just the honest debrief that feeds into it.

★ A quick after-storm check-in

If the generator did anything during the outage that gave you pause — ran rough, seemed to struggle, wouldn't restart easily — that's worth a call before the next one. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Seasonal Ohio prep: storms, ice, and summer heat

Portage County sees a real mix of weather, and each season asks something a little different of your plan.

Season	What to check
Spring storms	Fuel freshness after winter, cords and connections
Summer heat	Ventilation around the generator, fridge and freezer plan
Fall	Air filter, spark plug, and battery before winter arrives
Winter ice	Cold-weather oil, a clear path to the generator, snow off the exhaust

✓ **Our cold-weather guide covers winter starts in depth**

If ice storms are your household's most likely outage, it's worth reading that guide closely before the first hard freeze.

Your map to the rest of this series

This guide is the hub — these are the guides that go deep on each piece.

If you need...	See our guide on...
Picking a generator	How to choose a generator
Getting the size right	Sizing a generator
Carbon-monoxide safety	Carbon monoxide safety
Fuel choices, or keeping it fresh	Fuel types, or fuel storage
Wiring it into the house	Connecting to the house, transfer switches, or interlock kits
The well pump	Backing up your well pump
The fridge and freezer	Protecting your fridge and freezer
Ongoing care	Routine maintenance

★ **Every guide in this series is free**

Read them in whatever order your home needs. And if you'd rather talk it through than read, that's exactly what a call to (330) 200-8042 is for.

The printable outage checklist

The whole plan, condensed to what you'd actually want taped up near the generator.

- ☐ Before: right-sized, tested generator; fresh fuel; cords or hookup ready; CO alarms tested; must-run list written.
- ☐ Setup: outside, 20+ feet away, exhaust pointed away, CO alarms on.
- ☐ Start: nothing plugged in first, then add loads one at a time.
- ☐ Running: cool and off before refueling; cycle loads if needed; keep the fridge and freezer closed.
- ☐ After: cool down fully, power down in order, store or stabilize fuel, note the hours.

★ Let's walk your whole plan together

If you'd like help turning this checklist into a plan that's specific to your home, that's exactly what a visit is for — call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The planning questions I hear most often, answered plainly.

Q: Do I really need to do all of this before an outage?

The before-the-storm items are what make everything else in this plan work smoothly. Skipping them doesn't mean disaster, but it does mean improvising in the dark instead of following a plan.

Q: What's the very first thing to do when the power goes out?

Take a breath, then set the generator up outside, 20-plus feet away, exhaust pointed away, before you do anything else. Everything else can wait a few minutes.

Q: How do I know if my fuel plan is enough?

Think through your longest realistic outage and plan fuel for that plus a modest reserve. Our fuel-storage guide can help you think through rotation so you're never caught with only old fuel on hand.

Q: What if different guides in this series seem to overlap?

A little overlap is intentional — the CO safety rule, for instance, shows up everywhere because it matters everywhere. This guide is the map; the others are where you go for the full depth on one topic.

Q: I'm overwhelmed — where do I actually start?

Start with the before-the-storm checklist a few pages back. Work down it at whatever pace makes sense, and call me if you want help prioritizing.

★ Let's make the plan simple

You don't need to master this whole series overnight. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, tell me where you're starting from, and I'll help you build the plan one sensible step at a time.

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 having a real outage plan 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.

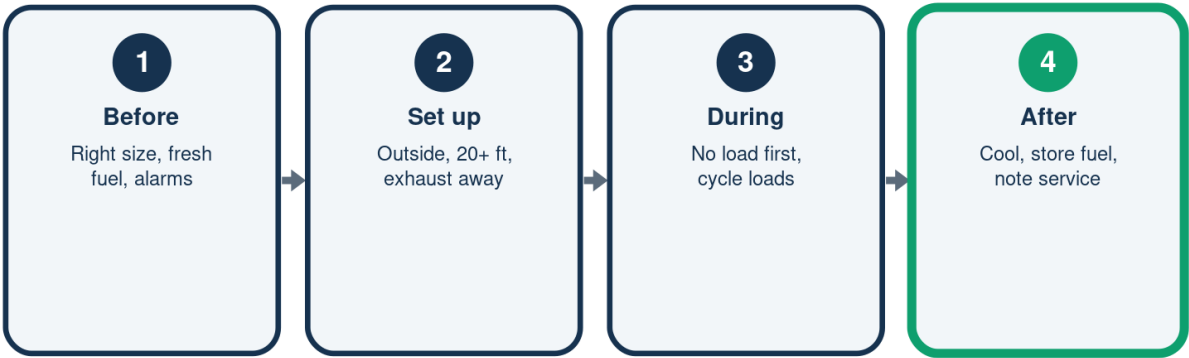
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

Your Outage, Start to Finish

The four phases of a calm, well-run outage



Do these in order and the outage runs itself.

Your Before-the-Storm Checklist

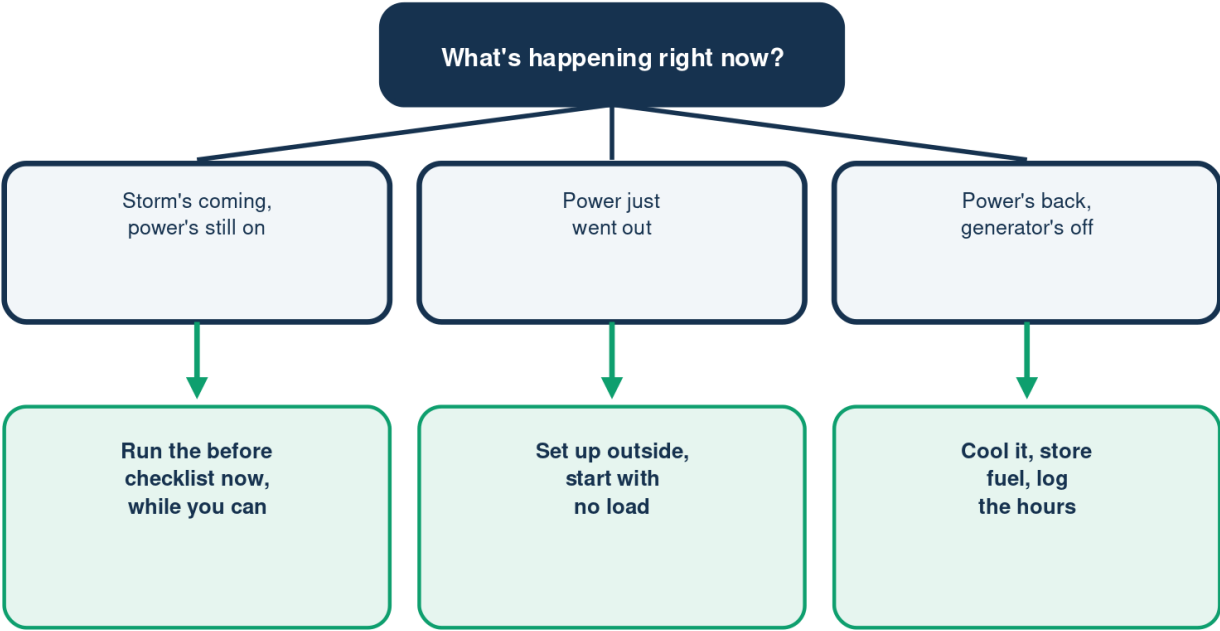
Handle these long before a forecast says storm

The short version	
The machine	Right-sized, tested
The fuel	Fresh, stabilized,
The hookup	Cords, or an electrician's
The alarms	CO alarms tested, in place
The plan	Must-run list, water, medical

Do these once, then just maintain them season to season.

What's Your Outage Situation?

Match where you are right now to the next step



On a well? Add water and the pump's surge to every step of this.

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

Which Guide Covers What?

This guide is the hub -- the others go deep

See our guide on	
Picking the size	Choosing, or sizing
Fuel choices	Fuel types, or storage
Wiring it in	Connecting, transfer switch
The well pump	Backing up your well pump
Fridge and freezer	Protecting food safely

Every guide in this series is free, plain English, and yours to keep.



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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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