



An Extended Guide · No. 1263

Off-Season Storage & Winterizing

Putting it away and waking it up

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Hello, and welcome

When the storms have passed and you're ready to put the generator away until next time — or you're wondering whether to put it away at all — this guide walks you through storing it, winterizing it, and waking it back up so it starts right when you need it.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent more than 30 years helping folks get comfortable with their technology — patiently, in plain language, and at their own pace. Think of this guide as me sitting at your kitchen table, walking through it with you one step at a time.

We'll cover the number-one thing that ruins a stored generator (stale fuel) and the two accepted ways to prevent it, changing the oil, a good cleaning, finding a dry spot safe from mice, and the spring wake-up. We'll also cover the big exception — if you keep yours ready for winter storm season, you do NOT fully winterize it — plus a few tips for starting in the cold. In town or out in the country, there's a plan here for you.

You do not have to read this all at once, and you certainly don't have to memorize it. Skip to whatever you need, keep it handy, and know that a real person is only a phone call away.

★ How to use this guide

Each page stands on its own. Read one, take what's useful, and come back for the next when you're ready. If a step ever feels fuzzy, that's on my writing — not on you — and you can always call me at (330) 200-8042.

Stale fuel is enemy number one

If a stored generator won't start next season, the reason is almost always the same one: old fuel left sitting in the tank and the carburetor.

Gasoline is not made to sit. Over a matter of weeks to a few months it begins to break down, and it leaves behind a sticky varnish and gum that clogs the tiny passages inside the carburetor — the part that feeds the engine. Once those passages gum up, the engine starves for fuel and simply won't run, no matter how hard you pull.

Most gasoline sold today has some ethanol in it (up to about 10 percent). Ethanol pulls in moisture from the air and gums up small engines faster than straight gas does. Some folks buy ethanol-free gas just for storage — check your manual to see what the maker recommends for your unit.

Now the good news: you don't have to let this happen. There are two simple, well-accepted ways to put the fuel to bed so it can't spoil, and we'll walk through each on the next pages. Pick whichever one your owner's manual points you to.

✓ About thirty days is the rule of thumb

A few weeks between weekend uses is usually fine. But if the generator will sit more than about a month, don't just leave ordinary pump gas in it. Beyond roughly thirty days, either run it dry or treat the fuel with stabilizer. A whole season on untreated gas is asking for a no-start.

The two accepted ways to handle the fuel

There are exactly two well-accepted approaches, and your owner's manual will tell you which one the maker prefers. Do that one.

Approach A — run it dry. You empty the tank and let the engine run the carburetor dry, so there's no fuel left anywhere to go stale. Nothing in it means nothing to gum up over a long sleep.

Approach B — fresh fuel plus stabilizer. You fill the tank with fresh gas, add a measured splash of fuel stabilizer, and run the unit a few minutes so the treated fuel reaches the carburetor. The stabilizer keeps that fuel usable for months instead of turning to varnish.

Both work well. Which is better comes down to your particular unit and how long it will sit, and the manual is the tie-breaker — so start there. The next two pages walk through each one, step by gentle step.

! The one thing you never do

Whatever you choose, never fill it with plain, untreated gas and walk away for the winter. That's the surest recipe for a unit that won't start and a carburetor that needs cleaning come spring. Dry, or stabilized — it's always one or the other.

Approach A: run it dry

Running it dry means leaving no fuel behind to spoil. Here's the gentle version — follow your manual's exact steps, since units differ.

- **Run the tank low.** Let the generator run until the tank is nearly empty, or drain the tank into an approved gas can the way the manual describes.
- **Close the fuel valve.** If your unit has a fuel shutoff, close it and let the engine keep running until it uses up what's left in the carburetor and stalls on its own.
- **Empty the carburetor bowl.** Some units have a small carburetor drain screw the manual has you loosen to let the last bit out. Follow its steps exactly, then snug it back up.

Why folks like this way: with nothing left inside to turn to varnish, there's very little to go wrong over a long sit. It's a fine choice for a unit that's going to sleep the whole season and won't be touched until spring.

The trade-off is that it takes a few extra minutes, you'll need a safe container for any drained gasoline, and you'll add fresh fuel again in the spring. Storing that gas safely is its own small job — there's a separate guide in this series on it.

✓ Do the draining outdoors

Drain fuel outside, with the engine cool, no smoking and no open flame nearby, into an approved gas can. Wipe up any spills right away. A minute of care here keeps a simple job a safe one.

Approach B: fresh fuel plus stabilizer

The other accepted way is the opposite idea: fill it with good fuel, protect that fuel, and circulate it through the engine.

- **Start with fresh gas.** Top the tank with fresh gasoline (ethanol-free, if your manual likes that for storage).
- **Add stabilizer.** Measure in fuel stabilizer at the dose printed on the bottle for that amount of gas. It's inexpensive and sold at any hardware or auto store.
- **Run it a few minutes.** Start the generator and let it run for several minutes so the treated fuel is pulled all the way through the lines and into the carburetor.

That last step is the one people forget, and it matters: stabilizer only protects the fuel it actually reaches. If you pour it in the tank but never run the engine, the carburetor is still full of untreated gas. A few minutes of running solves that.

Why folks like this way: it's simple, and the unit is closer to ready if you end up needing it sooner than planned. A full, treated tank also leaves less empty space inside for moisture to condense.

Stabilized fuel generally stays good for several months, often right through a season — check the time frame on the bottle. If the unit will sit much longer than that, plan to freshen the fuel when the time is up.

Change the oil before it sleeps

Here's an easy step people skip: put fresh oil in before a long storage, not after you drag it back out.

Used oil carries acids, moisture, and fine grit picked up while the engine ran. Left to sit all winter, that gunk settles against the engine's insides, where it can invite rust and corrosion. Fresh, clean oil is protective — it's the right thing to have coating the engine during a long rest.

The how is just like a lawn mower: warm the engine for a minute so the oil flows freely, shut it off, drain the old oil the way the manual shows, then refill to the mark with the oil weight it calls for. That's the whole job.

While you're down there, it's a good moment to glance at the air filter and, per the manual, the spark plug. A unit that's clean inside and out goes to sleep happy and wakes up the same way.

★ Happy to do it with you

The first oil change on a generator trips a lot of folks up — finding the drain, knowing the right weight, not making a mess. Give me a call and I'll walk you through it over the phone, or do it with you on a visit. Just call (330) 200-8042.

Give it a good wipe-down

A clean generator stores better, and — just as important — wiping it down is when you spot the little troubles before they hide away for months.

Wipe off dust, grass clippings, oil, and fuel smudges with a rag. Clear leaves and debris away from the cooling vents and from around the outlets. What you don't do is hose it down or reach for a pressure washer — driving water into the wrong places is no friend to the electronics inside.

As you wipe, give it a good looking-over: frayed cords, loose bolts, cracked rubber, anything that looks chewed. Catching a nibbled cord now beats discovering it in the dark during an outage.

Let the unit be fully cool and dry before you cover it. A warm or slightly damp generator sealed under a cover can trap moisture against the metal — the very thing we're working to avoid.

✓ Loop the cords loosely

Don't cinch the cords into tight kinks for months on end; coil them in loose loops so they don't take a set and crack. Tuck the manual and any small parts into a labeled bag taped to the unit, so everything's right there next season.

A dry spot, up off the floor

Where it sleeps matters nearly as much as how you prep it. The two enemies are damp and dirt.

Pick a dry, sheltered place — a garage, a shed, or an outbuilding, out of the rain and snow. It does not need to be heated. It needs to be dry.

If you can, get it up off a bare concrete floor. Concrete wicks moisture up from the ground, and a cold slab invites condensation to bead on the metal. A wooden pallet, a couple of boards, or a low shelf keeps air moving underneath and the unit off the damp.

Cover it with a proper breathable storage cover, not a sealed plastic tarp that traps moisture underneath. (A vented canopy made for running the unit in the rain is a different item — here you want a storage cover for a unit that's switched off.)

! Store it there, but never run it there

Keeping a fueled generator in the garage or shed is perfectly fine. Starting or running it inside there is not — not ever, not even for a quick test, and not with the door open. When it's time for a test run or the real thing, it goes outside, at least 20 feet from the house. The safety pages cover why.

Electric start? Mind the battery

If your generator starts with a key or a push-button, it has a small battery on board — and batteries do not like sitting idle.

A battery slowly drains itself just sitting there, and one left flat through the winter can be ruined by spring. Then, on the day you need it most, the electric start won't turn the engine over and you're reaching for the backup pull cord in the cold.

The easy fix is a **battery tender**, sometimes called a maintainer — a small charger that plugs into the wall and keeps the battery gently topped off without overcharging it. Clip it on for the season and forget about it. Many electric-start units are made to accept one.

No tender? Then either run the generator every few weeks (we'll come to that), or disconnect the battery and keep it somewhere cool and dry, charging it now and again. Cold is especially hard on a battery, so an unheated shed is a rough place for one to spend the winter.

✓ Pull-start units skip all this

If yours starts with a pull cord and has no battery, there's nothing here to keep charged — one less thing to remember. Worth keeping in mind if a simple, low-fuss backup is what appeals to you.

If you live in town: city and suburb

For most of my customers in town — Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro, Aurora — the generator lives in the garage or a backyard shed, and storage is a tidy seasonal routine.

In town you often lean on the generator less. City power tends to come back sooner, and you're not depending on it for your water. So many folks in town genuinely do put it away for a good stretch — through the summer and fall, say, if winter storms are the only real worry. That makes a clean seasonal swap simple and sensible.

The garage is the usual home. Keep it in a corner, up on a board or a shelf off the concrete, covered, with fresh oil in it and the fuel handled. When storm season comes back around, you pull it out, add fresh gas, and give it a test run — and you're set.

One neighborly note: when you do that test run, it still goes outside and at least 20 feet from the house — yours and the neighbors' both. A driveway or back-patio spot works nicely. Quick and quiet in eco mode, then back under its cover it goes.

✓ Tie storage to the calendar

Pick two easy dates a year: one to put it away, after the last storm risk of the season, and one to bring it back and test it, before the next season starts. Stick the dates on the fridge so it's never a guess whether it's ready.

If you're in the country on a well

Out in the townships — Atwater, Rootstown, Deerfield, Palmyra — the generator often lives in a barn or outbuilding, and two things are different out here: the critters are bolder, and many folks never really put it away at all.

On a well, remember, the generator is your water. Country outages can run long, and they don't wait for a convenient season — an ice storm in January is exactly when you need the pump running. So a great many of my rural customers keep theirs ready year-round rather than fully winterizing it. There's more on that choice a few pages on.

If you do store it for a stretch, a barn or pole building makes a fine dry home — just know that outbuildings are prime mouse country. That's the big rural storage worry, and the next pages cover keeping them out. A chewed wire or a nest built up in the engine housing is a real risk out here, not a rare one.

! The honest truth about well pumps

Most home well pumps run on 240 volts, and the small, quiet inverter generators most folks picture put out only 120 volts — so they cannot run the pump at all. For a well you need a larger inverter unit with a 120/240-volt outlet, sized to your pump, and a proper way to connect it. Pairing two little units together does not fix this — two 120-volt units still only make 120 volts. I'll help you get the right size, and bring in a licensed electrician for the hookup.

Whether you store it or keep it ready, get it up off the barn's dirt or concrete floor, cover it, and look in on it now and then. A generator that sat all summer with a mouse nest tucked inside is no help at all in a December ice storm.

The safety talk: carbon monoxide

Storing and waking up a generator both mean running it — a test start before you put it away, and another when you bring it back — and any time it runs, it makes carbon monoxide. So this one rule rides along even into the off-season.

Every generator that burns gasoline or propane makes carbon monoxide, or "CO" — a gas you cannot see or smell. It is the one real danger with a generator, and it is completely avoidable. More people are hurt by running a generator in the wrong place than by anything else, so please read this page twice.

Outside only — no exceptions

Never run a generator indoors, and that includes the garage, the basement, a shed, a carport, or a covered porch — even with the door up or a window open. CO pools and seeps into the house. The only safe place is outdoors, in the open air.

At least 20 feet away, exhaust pointed away

Set the generator at least 20 feet from the house, and turn it so the exhaust blows **away** from any door, window, or vent. Don't tuck it against the wall to hide it or keep it dry — give it room to breathe and let the fumes drift off.

Alarms are your safety net

Put working carbon-monoxide alarms on every level of your home and near the bedrooms, and use ones with a battery backup so they work when the power is out. Test them now, before storm season, not during it.

Keeping mice and pests out

A stored generator is a cozy, sheltered box, which is exactly what a mouse is hunting for come fall. A little prevention now saves a real headache in the spring.

Here's why it matters: mice nest in the engine housing and around the frame, and they chew wiring, foam, and fuel lines to do it. A nest can block the cooling air, and a single chewed wire can stop the unit cold. In a barn or shed it isn't really a question of whether they'll try — it's how you keep them out.

Plug the openings. Once the unit is cool, stuff clean rags or steel wool loosely into the exhaust pipe and any other large openings. This blocks the easiest doors in. (More on taking them back out in a moment — it matters.)

Discourage them around it. Keep the storage area swept and clear of feed, seed, and clutter that gives cover. Some folks tuck repellent packets, peppermint, or dryer sheets nearby, and a few traps around the building help. Keeping the unit up off the floor makes it less inviting, too.

! Take the plugs back out before you start it

If you stuff the exhaust or intake, you must remove every plug before you start the engine again. Running it with a rag jammed in the exhaust can damage it. Tie a bright tag to the pull cord or the key as a reminder — that little tag is cheap insurance against an easy mistake.

How long will it be sitting?

How much you fuss depends on how long it'll rest. There's a real difference between a couple of weeks and a whole season.

A short break, a few weeks between uses. Fresh fuel is usually fine as it is, especially if you start the unit now and then. There's not much to do beyond keeping it clean and covered.

About a month or more. This is the line where the fuel needs help. Beyond roughly thirty days, either run it dry or add stabilizer — don't leave plain pump gas sitting in it past that.

A full season or longer. This is the real "winterizing." Do the whole routine: handle the fuel, change the oil, clean it up, store it dry and pest-proofed, and mind the battery. That's what the front pages of this guide are all about.

✓ When in doubt, treat it like long storage

The full routine never hurts anything. If you're unsure how long the unit will sit, go ahead and prep it as if for the whole season. A well-prepped generator that ends up getting used sooner is none the worse for it.

The big exception: don't winterize what you'll need

Here's the caveat that trips people up. If you keep your generator for winter storm season, do NOT fully put it away — you may need it in January.

Winterizing means making the unit sleep: the fuel drained or stabilized for a long rest, sometimes the battery pulled out and set aside. A fully winterized generator is not a five-minute grab in the middle of an ice storm — and ice storms are exactly when Ohio's power tends to go.

So if your generator's whole job is winter backup — especially on a well, where an outage means no water at all — you keep it **ready**, not stored. That means it stays fueled with fresh, stabilized gas (or a full propane tank on hand), the oil is good, the battery is charged, and you run it now and then so you KNOW it will start.

Full winterizing is for the units you truly won't touch until spring — a camping or tailgating generator, say, or a backup in a place whose outages come in summer heat rather than winter ice. The trick is simply to match the plan to when you'll actually need it.

★ Not sure which camp you're in?

A five-minute call sorts it out. If there's any real chance you'll want the generator this winter, we keep it ready rather than tucking it away. I'd rather talk it through than have you guess. Call me at (330) 200-8042.

Keeping it storm-ready through the winter

If you're keeping it ready rather than stored away, the job is an easy one: keep it exercised, keep it fueled, and keep an eye on it.

- **Run it about once a month.** Start it up and let it run fifteen or twenty minutes with something plugged in. That keeps fresh fuel in the lines, the battery charged, and proves to you that it starts.
- **Keep fresh, stabilized fuel.** Rotate your gasoline so it never goes stale, and keep a little extra stored safely. Propane folks: keep a full spare tank on the shelf.
- **Check the oil and give it a look.** A quick oil check and a glance for mouse nests or chewed cords each time you exercise it.
- **Keep the battery up.** A tender on electric-start units, right through the winter.

It's lighter work than it sounds — a quarter hour a month and you're never caught out. Tie it to something you already do, like paying a bill on the first of the month, and it becomes a habit you don't have to think about.

✓ Keep the essentials staged

With the generator ready, keep the rest ready too: heavy-duty outdoor cords, fresh batteries for the CO alarms, and a full gas can, all where you can lay hands on them in the dark. Ready means ready.

Starting it in the cold

A generator you need in January has to start in the cold, and the cold changes a few things. None of them are hard.

Fresh fuel matters even more. Cold, stale gas is a poor starter. Keep the fuel fresh and stabilized, as we've said, and the engine will catch far more willingly on a frigid morning.

Use the choke. A cold engine needs the choke — that little lever — to start. Set it, start the engine, let it run and warm for a minute or two, then ease the choke back off as it smooths out. Let it warm up before you pile on a heavy load.

Propane gets sluggish in deep cold. Propane doesn't vaporize as eagerly when it's bitter out, so a propane or dual-fuel unit can be harder to start on the very coldest days. If yours is dual-fuel, gasoline often lights easier in a hard freeze — start on gas and switch over once it's running warm, if you like.

✓ Give it a warm-up lap

Start it, then let it idle and warm for a couple of minutes before you plug in the refrigerator or the furnace. A warmed-up engine takes the load far better than a cold one still sputtering to life. And do keep the battery charged — cold saps electric starters, and the manual may call for a thinner oil in winter for easier cranking.

Waking it up in the spring

Bringing a stored generator back to life is a short, satisfying checklist. Do it on a nice day — not in the middle of the storm you meant to prep for.

- ❑ Take out any pest plugs first — remove rags or steel wool from the exhaust and intake. (That bright tag you tied on? This is why.)
- ❑ Look it over — check for mouse nests, chewed wires, cracks, or corrosion before you start it.
- ❑ Check the oil — top it to the mark; if it's been more than a season, go ahead and put in fresh oil.
- ❑ Fresh fuel — if you ran it dry, add fresh gas. If you stored it stabilized, it's likely fine, but freshen it if it's been many months.
- ❑ Battery — reconnect it or unclip the tender, and make sure it's charged.
- ❑ Test run — start it outside, at least 20 feet out, and let it run fifteen or twenty minutes with something plugged in.

If it fights you on that first start after a long sleep, nine times out of ten the culprit is the fuel — and that's a fixable problem, not a broken generator. Call me before you wrestle with it and we'll sort it out.

Common storage worries, put to rest

A few of the same questions come up every fall. Here are the short, plain answers.

Q: Will old gas really keep it from starting?

More than anything else, yes. Stale, gummy fuel is the number-one reason a stored generator won't start. Handle the fuel and you've handled the biggest risk there is.

Q: Do I have to drain it, or is stabilizer enough?

Either is fine — do whichever your manual prefers. Both prevent stale-fuel trouble, and neither one is "more correct" for every unit. The manual is your tie-breaker.

Q: Is it safe to store it in the garage?

Storing it there is perfectly fine. Running it there is never safe — not even for a quick test. It goes outside to run, every single time, because of carbon monoxide.

Q: It's been sitting two years untouched. Now what?

Don't force it. Put in fresh oil and fresh fuel, look it over for nests and chewed wires, then try a test start. If it won't go, it's usually the carburetor — an easy fix or a quick call to me.

How I can help

Storing a generator right, or keeping it storm-ready through an Ohio winter, is exactly the kind of small, fussy job that's easier with a hand — and it's just the sort of thing I'm glad to help folks with around Portage County.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech right here in Portage County. I'm a tech-help person, not a power company and not a pushy salesman — I help folks pick the right gear, set it up, and feel confident using it. With generators, that means helping you choose a unit that fits your home and your budget, showing you how to run it safely, and getting your internet, TV, and devices happily back on once the power's flowing.

For anything that ties the generator into your home's wiring — a transfer switch for a well pump or a furnace, say — I'm not a licensed electrician, so I'll bring one in for that part and handle the rest myself. You get one friendly point of contact for the whole job.

Three easy ways to get help

- **An in-home visit** — a flat \$99 first visit. I come to you, here in Portage County, and every visit is 30-day come-back-free.
- **Remote help** — a flat \$49 screen-share, up to two hours, for the things I can sort out without coming over (it's free for Support Plan members).
- **A Support Plan** — \$39 a month for folks who'd like me on call all year.

Your storage and wake-up checklist

Tear this out and tape it inside the cabinet where you keep the manual. Two short lists — one for putting it away, one for waking it up.

Putting it away

- ☐ Fuel handled — run dry, OR fresh gas with stabilizer, run a few minutes to circulate it.
- ☐ Fresh oil in, filled to the mark.
- ☐ Wiped clean, and fully cooled and dried before covering.
- ☐ Stored dry, up off the concrete, under a breathable cover.
- ☐ Battery on a tender, for electric-start units.
- ☐ Exhaust and intake plugged against mice — with a bright reminder tag.

Waking it up

- ☐ Pest plugs removed first.
- ☐ Looked over for nests and chewed wires.
- ☐ Oil checked; fuel fresh.
- ☐ Battery charged and connected.
- ☐ Test run outside, at least 20 feet out, for fifteen or twenty minutes.

A few check marks in the fall, a few more in the spring, and it starts right up when the sky turns green. That's the whole trick to it.

The short version

If you remember nothing else from this guide, remember these:

- Stale fuel is enemy number one. Handle it before storage — run the unit dry, or add stabilizer and run it a few minutes to circulate it.
- Change the oil before a long sleep, wipe the unit down, and store it dry and covered, up off the concrete, with the openings plugged against mice.
- Give electric-start units a battery tender, and take any pest plugs back out before you ever start it again.
- If you might need it for winter storms — especially on a well — do NOT fully winterize it. Keep it fueled, exercised, and storm-ready.
- Wake it up in spring with fresh fuel, an oil check, and a test run outdoors — and I'm only a phone call away if it's stubborn.

Off-Season Storage at a Glance

Putting it away, the short version

The short answer		Why it matters
The enemy	Stale, gummy fuel	Clogs the carburetor
The fix	Run it dry, or	add fuel stabilizer
Before it sits	Change the oil,	wipe it clean
Where to keep it	Dry and covered,	up off the floor
Might need it?	Keep it storm-ready,	not fully stored

Handle the fuel, change the oil, store it dry and pest-free — or keep it ready if winter storms are the worry.

Putting It Away for the Season

The order to do it in



A half-hour in the fall, and it wakes up ready in the spring.

Run It Dry vs. Stabilize the Fuel

Two accepted ways to handle it

	Run it dry	Fuel + stabilizer
What you do	Empty it out	Treat the fuel
Best when	A long sleep	Might need it soon
Leaves behind	Nothing to spoil	A full, ready tank
The catch	Drain gas safely	Freshen if months
Come spring	Add fresh gas	Likely ready

Both are right — do whichever your manual prefers. Never store it on plain, untreated gas.

Store It Away or Keep It Storm-Ready?

Match the plan to when you'll need it

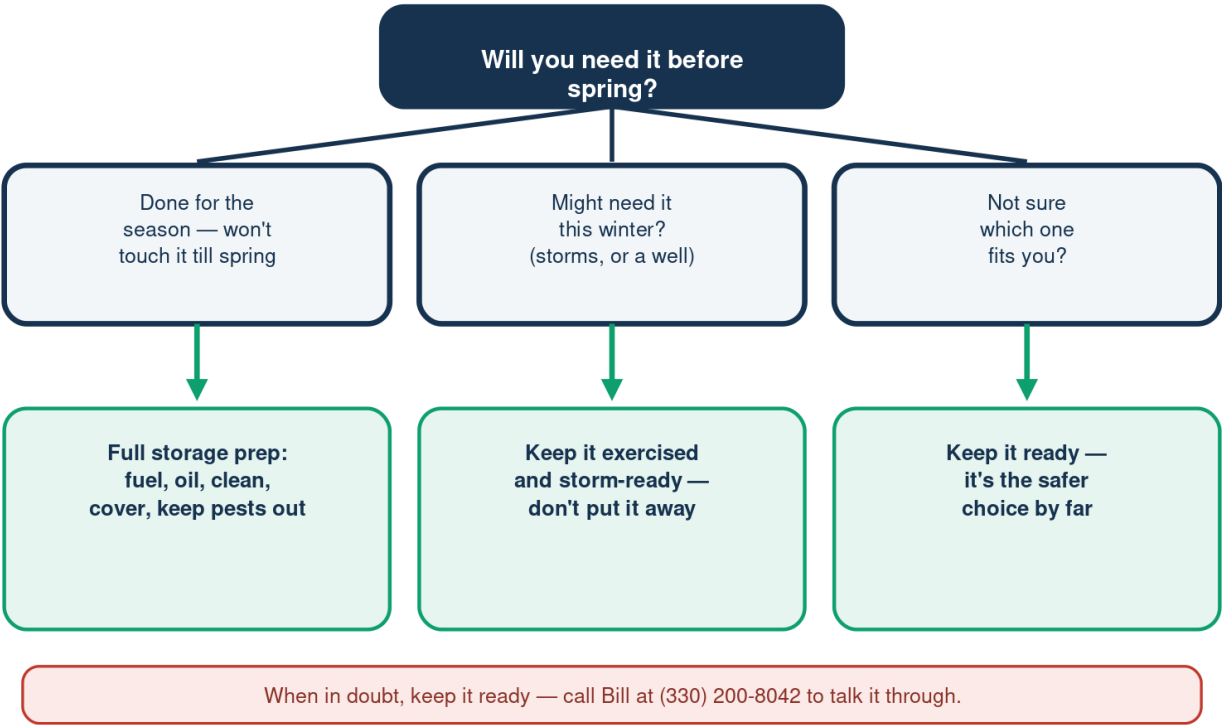


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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@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*



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