



An Extended Guide · No. 1265

Storm-Season Readiness (Ohio)

Be ready before the lights go out

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Hello, and welcome

In Ohio, sooner or later the power goes out — a summer storm drops a limb across the line, or winter ice brings the wires down — and the difference between a scary night and a manageable one comes down to a little getting ready beforehand.

That's what this friendly guide is all about.

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.

In these pages we'll walk through the whole of storm-season readiness in plain English: why Ohio's weather does this to us, the simple things to check before a storm, what to power first when the lights go out, a family plan everyone can follow, and how to handle the storm safely and clean up carefully once it passes. Whether you're in town or out in the country on a well, there's a plan here for you — and no jargon anywhere.

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.

Why Ohio keeps the power company busy

If you've lived a few winters and summers here in Portage County, you already know the truth: the power will go out. It's not a question of if, only when — and being ready for it is a kindness you do for yourself.

Summer here brings its own kind of trouble. A line of afternoon **thunderstorms** can roll through with wind and lightning that drop tree limbs across the lines, and every so often we get a **derecho** — a fast-moving wall of straight-line wind that can act like a landlocked hurricane, knocking out power across whole counties at once. Those are the storms that turn a few flickering lights into days in the dark.

Winter is the other season to respect. An **ice storm** can coat every wire and branch in a heavy glaze until limbs snap and lines come down, and a hard **winter wind** can do the same with deep cold on top of it. The winter outages are the ones that worry me most, because when the furnace quits in a hard freeze, a dark house gets dangerously cold in a hurry.

The point of naming all this isn't to scare you — it's to make one gentle case. These storms are normal here. They come every year, in one form or another. A little readiness, done ahead of time on a calm afternoon, is what turns a frightening night into a manageable inconvenience. That's the whole spirit of this guide, and the rest of it is just the how.

✓ You don't have to predict the storm

You'll never guess exactly when the power will go, and you don't have to. The trick is to be ready all season long, so whenever it happens — a July derecho or a February ice storm — you're simply reaching for a plan you already have, not scrambling in the dark.

The whole idea: ready before, not during

There's one simple thought at the heart of this entire guide, and if it's all you take away you'll be in fine shape: everything that keeps you comfortable in an outage is done **before** the storm, on a calm day — not by flashlight while the wind howls.

When the power actually goes out, it's dark, it may be cold, and everyone's a little rattled. That is the worst possible moment to discover the gas can is empty, the generator won't start, or nobody can find the extension cords. The families who sail through an outage aren't luckier than anyone else — they simply did a handful of quiet things ahead of time.

Of all those things, one matters more than the rest: **actually starting your generator before you need it**. The saddest generator in the world is the one bought with the best intentions, set in the garage, and never run — the one that just clicks and sputters on the worst night of the year, when it's needed most. A machine that sits for years with stale fuel and never turns over isn't backup power. It's a heavy paperweight.

So the single most valuable habit in this guide is the **test run**. Once a month or so, on a nice day, pull it out, start it up, and let it run fifteen or twenty minutes with something plugged in. You're not just keeping it healthy — you're proving to yourself that it works, so that when the sky turns green you reach for it with confidence instead of crossing your fingers.

★ Confidence is the real goal

Everything in these pages is aimed at one feeling: knowing, before the storm ever comes, that you and your family will be all right. A tested generator, a full gas can, and a simple plan buy you that peace of mind. If you'd like a hand setting it up the first time, that's exactly what I'm here for — just call (330) 200-8042.

Fuel, oil, and cords — ready to go

Three humble things make the difference between a generator that runs the moment you need it and one that lets you down: fresh fuel, good oil, and the right cords, all sorted out ahead of time.

Start with **fuel**, because it's the most common reason a generator won't start. Gasoline goes stale in just a few months — it gums up the works and can leave you stranded. So keep your gas fresh: buy it close to when you'll use it, add a splash of **fuel stabilizer** to any that will sit for more than a month, and rotate your supply so you're always burning the oldest first. Keep a safe, approved can or two filled during storm season, stored outside your living space and away from any heat or flame. If your unit runs on propane, keep a spare tank on hand — propane keeps for years without going stale.

Next, **oil**. A generator needs oil just like a lawn mower, and running one low or dry will ruin the engine. Check the oil level before storm season and top it to the mark with the weight the manual calls for. It takes two minutes and saves you a very expensive mistake.

Finally, the **cords**. To get the power from the generator — which lives safely outside — into the house, you need one or two good **heavy-duty outdoor extension cords**, thick enough for the job and clearly marked for outdoor use. Have them bought, rated, and coiled up with the generator now, not added to a shopping list at the worst moment. A thin indoor cord asked to carry a refrigerator can overheat, so this is not the place to make do.

✓ Keep it all together

Store the stabilizer, a funnel, the oil, and the cords in a bin right next to the generator. When a storm is in the forecast, everything you need is in one place — no hunting through the garage in a hurry.

Decide what matters most — ahead of time

A modest generator can't run your whole house at once, and it doesn't need to. The secret is to decide, calmly and in advance, the short list of things that truly matter to you — so you're never standing in the dark making hard choices.

Here's the reassuring part: most homes need far less than people imagine. You don't run the whole house on a generator; you run the few things that keep you safe, fed, and comfortable. Everything else can wait until the lights come back. Naming that short list ahead of time is one of the most useful things you'll ever do on a quiet afternoon.

So walk through your home and ask a simple question at each stop: **if the power were out for two days, what here would I truly want running?** For most folks the honest answer is short — the refrigerator and freezer, some heat, a few lights, phones and the internet, and, if someone depends on one, a medical device. Out in the country, the well pump joins the top of that list, because no power means no water.

Write that list down. Then think about which items could run at the same time and which you'd take turns with — you might run the furnace blower and the fridge together for a while, then switch to charging phones and running the well pump. Knowing your list, and roughly how much your generator can handle at once, turns a stressful night into a series of small, calm decisions you've already made.

★ Your list is shorter than you think

When I sit with folks and we actually write it out, they're almost always surprised how little they truly need to stay comfortable. That short list is what we size a generator around, and it's the backbone of your whole storm plan. I'm glad to help you make yours — (330) 200-8042.

What to power, in priority order

When you can't run everything at once, a simple order of priority keeps you safe and sane. Here's a sensible ranking for most homes — with one firm rule: anything that keeps a person safe always comes first.

1. Life and safety, always first. If someone in the home relies on a **medical device**, that comes before all else — more on that just below. In a hard freeze, **heat** is a safety matter too: most gas furnaces need only their **blower fan** powered to push warm air through the house, which is a modest load a small generator can handle. And out in the country, the **well pump** that gives you water is safety-critical — though, as we'll see, it takes a larger unit.

2. Protect your food. Once people are safe and warm, the **refrigerator and freezer** are usually the next worry, and rightly so — a freezer full of a garden's harvest or a side of beef is real money. The good news is that food coasts cold for hours with the doors shut, so you can run the generator a while, then shut it off and let the cold hold.

3. Light, news, and connection. After that come the comforts that make an outage bearable: a few **lights** so nobody trips in the dark, and your **phones and internet** so you can check on family, follow the weather, and call for help. These sip very little power and are easy to keep going.

Notice the shape of it: safety, then food, then comfort. You won't always run them in a strict line — often you'll run several together — but when you must choose, this order keeps first things first.

! Medical devices need their own plan

If anyone depends on oxygen, a CPAP, or another life-sustaining device, a generator is only part of the answer. Please build a written outage plan with your doctor and equipment supplier, keep any backup they recommend, and register with your power company's medical priority list. There's a full guide on this in the series, and I'm glad to help with the equipment side.

A simple family plan everyone knows

A generator is only as good as the people who can use it. A few minutes spent making sure everyone in the house knows the plan means it won't all fall on one person — or fall apart if that person happens to be away.

Start with the most important question: **who starts the generator?** Ideally more than one person in the home knows how — because storms don't check whether the usual handy person is home. Walk your spouse, a grown child, or a trusted neighbor through starting it, at least once, on a calm day. The steps aren't hard, but the first time shouldn't be by flashlight in the rain.

Next, **where does everything live?** Everyone should know where to find the generator, the fuel, the stabilizer, the oil, the cords, the flashlights, and — this one gets forgotten — the **owner's manual**. Keep the manual in a labeled bag or bin with the unit, along with these guides. When a step is fuzzy at midnight, the manual is your best friend, and it's no help buried in a drawer indoors.

Finally, **who do you call?** Write down the numbers you might need and keep them where everyone can see them — on the fridge and in every phone. Your **power company**, to report the outage and any downed lines. A trusted **electrician**, for anything involving your home's wiring. And me, **Bill**, at (330) 200-8042 — for help getting the generator going, sorting out what to run, or just talking it through. You should never feel alone with this.

✓ Practice once, relax all season

One relaxed practice run on a sunny day is worth more than any amount of reading. Let each person who might need to start it actually do it once. After that, the plan lives in their hands, not just on paper.

Food, water, and medication

Beyond the generator itself, a little ordinary preparation in the pantry and the medicine cabinet goes a long way. None of it is fancy — it's the same good sense your grandparents kept without a second thought.

For **food**, keep a few days' worth that needs no cooking and no refrigeration — canned soups and vegetables, peanut butter, crackers, dried fruit, whatever your household actually likes to eat. A manual can opener is worth having where you can find it. Your generator will keep the fridge and freezer going, but a shelf of simple food means you're covered even in the first hours before it's running, or if fuel runs short.

Water is the one country folks must plan for and town folks often forget. If you're on a **private well**, remember that when the power stops, so does your water — the pump can't run. Store several days of **drinking water** ahead of storm season, roughly a gallon per person per day, and when a big storm is coming, fill some jugs and even the bathtub so you can flush and wash. Even on city water, a storm can bring a boil advisory, so a little stored water is never wasted.

Don't overlook **medication**. Keep a few days' supply on hand rather than letting it run to the last pill, and know which medicines must stay cold. For those, your generator keeping the refrigerator running is part of the plan — and a cooler with ice is a fine backup for the gap before it's going. If a medicine is truly essential, ask your pharmacist about keeping a small reserve.

✓ Frozen jugs do double duty

Fill some clean jugs three-quarters full and freeze them now. They help your freezer hold its cold longer, they can move to the fridge to keep it cool, and as they melt you've got clean drinking water. One cheap trick, three good jobs.

Light, news, and staying connected

Some of the most comforting things in an outage don't need the generator at all. A little kit of simple, reliable gear turns a dark, anxious night into one you can actually get through in good spirits.

First, **light**. Keep a few good **flashlights** where you can find them in the dark — one by the bed, one in the kitchen, one with the generator — and a supply of fresh batteries to match. Battery lanterns are lovely for lighting a whole room, and headlamps free up your hands for working outside. I gently steer folks away from candles: in a dark, busy house they're a fire waiting to happen, and you have safer, brighter choices.

Next, **news**. When the power and maybe the internet are down, a simple **battery-powered or hand-crank radio** is how you stay in touch with the outside world — weather updates, which roads are closed, when the utility expects the power back. Many of these radios can also charge a phone from the hand crank, which feels like a small miracle at hour thirty of an outage. Keep one in your kit with spare batteries.

And keep your **phones charged**. When a storm is in the forecast, top up every phone and tablet in the house, and keep a charged **power bank** or two on hand so you can refill them before the generator is running. Your phone is your lifeline — for weather, for family, for calling for help — so guarding its battery is one of the smartest small habits there is.

A little **warmth** rounds out the kit: keep extra blankets and warm layers handy for a winter outage, because even with the furnace blower running you may choose to save fuel and heat just one room. Gathering the family into a single warm room, radio on and flashlights ready, turns a rough night into something almost cozy.

✓ One bin, checked twice a year

Keep the radio, flashlights, batteries, and power banks together in one storm bin, and check them each spring and fall. Dead batteries in a drawer help no one; a ready bin is a quiet comfort.

Keep it ready, not winterized

There's a real difference between a generator that's **put away** for the season and one that's **ready** for it — and during storm season, ready is the only thing that will do.

You may have heard about **winterizing** a generator — draining the fuel, running the carburetor dry, and tucking it away clean for a long rest. That's exactly the right thing to do when you're storing a unit for months you won't use it. But it is precisely the **wrong** thing during storm season, because a drained, put-away generator can't help you when a storm blows in next Tuesday. In Ohio, storm season is nearly all year — summer's thunderstorms and derechos give way to winter's ice and wind with barely a pause between them.

So through the active season, keep your unit in a state of **readiness**: fuel fresh and stabilized, oil topped off, and the whole thing able to start and run within a few minutes of your deciding you need it. Ready doesn't mean fussed over — it just means not emptied out and buried behind the holiday boxes.

Keeping it ready comes down to the same easy habits we've covered. Run it briefly once a month so the fuel stays fresh in the lines and the engine stays limber. Keep the gas fresh with stabilizer and rotate your supply. Store it clean and dry under a proper cover — a storage cover for when it's off, never a cover while it's running. Do those few things and your generator is always just a pull-cord away from saving your evening.

★ There's a season to put it away — just not this one

When the long stretch of calm weather finally comes and you're confident the storms have passed, that's the time to winterize and rest it — and there's a full guide in this series on doing that right. During storm season, though, keep it ready. If you're not sure which mode you should be in, call me and we'll sort it out: (330) 200-8042.

If you live in town: city and suburb

Most of my customers here in town — in Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro, and Aurora — are on city power and city water, and storm readiness has a certain shape for you. The happy news is that in-town outages are usually the shorter ones.

When a summer thunderstorm or a winter squall knocks out power in a neighborhood, the utility can often get a town circuit back on within hours — crews reach it quickly, and lots of homes come back at once. So for most in-town outages, your plan mainly needs to cover a comfortable evening or two: keep the fridge cold, a few lights on, the phones charged, and the furnace blower running if it's cold.

But don't let the usual short outage lull you into skipping the prep, because now and then a big one comes. A **derecho** — one of those fast-moving summer windstorms — or a severe ice storm can flatten power to whole towns for **days**, not hours. When that happens, the folks who had their essentials list ready sail through, while everyone else is scrambling for gas and batteries at stores that have neither.

So in town, the sweet spot is a small, quiet inverter generator and a modest kit: fresh fuel, cords, flashlights, a radio, and a short priority list. You're on city water, so you don't have the well-pump worry — which means you can usually stay smaller, quieter, and easier on your close neighbors than a country home needs to be.

! Be a good neighbor with the noise and the exhaust

In a close neighborhood, set the generator where its exhaust points away from your own and your neighbors' windows — 20 feet from any house, yours and theirs — and run it in eco mode to keep it quiet. Good placement keeps everyone safe from carbon monoxide and keeps the peace on the block.

If you're in the country on a well

Out in the townships — Atwater, Rootstown, Deerfield, and Palmyra — storm readiness is a more serious business, and self-reliance is the name of the game. When the power goes in the country, you're often the last to get it back, and two of your most basic needs are on the line.

Start with the hard truth about **restoration**: utilities fix the big lines serving many homes first, and the rural roads with a handful of houses tend to come last. A country outage that a town would clear in hours can stretch to days. That single fact shapes everything — you plan for longer, and you keep more in reserve.

Two needs turn safety-critical in the country. The first is **water**: on a private well, no power means no pump, and no pump means no water for drinking, washing, or flushing. The second is **heat** in a hard freeze. Both are things a town home rarely worries about, and both are why a country generator has to be sized and stocked for more than an evening's inconvenience.

! 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.

So the country plan leans on reserves and self-reliance: more stored fuel, several days of drinking water, a bathtub filled when a storm's coming, extra blankets and food, and a generator with the muscle for the well pump and the furnace blower both. You're used to handling things yourself out here — this is simply that same good sense, pointed at the power going out. And when the well or the wiring is involved, I'll help you plan it and bring in a licensed electrician for the hookup.

The safety talk: carbon monoxide

During storm season you may run this generator for days at a stretch, starting and stopping it many times — which makes this the most important page in the entire guide. Every fuel-burning generator carries one danger that never takes a night off.

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.

When the storm hits: running it safely

You've done the hard part already — the readiness. When the lights actually go out, the job is simply to set the generator up safely and let it do what you've prepared it to do. Slow and steady wins here.

First, take a breath and **note the time**, then get the generator into its spot: **outside, at least 20 feet from the house**, on level ground, with the exhaust pointed away from every door, window, and vent. This is the rule that never bends, and the page just before this one — the carbon monoxide page — explains exactly why. Never, ever run it in the garage, the basement, or a shed, even with the door open.

With it safely placed, start it up following your unit's steps, and let it settle for a minute before you plug anything in. Then run your **heavy-duty cord** from the generator to the things on your priority list. Start your biggest item — the refrigerator, say — first, let it settle, then add the next, so you don't hit the machine with everything at once. If it has an eco or economy mode, a moment with it switched off gives the engine full muscle for a motor kicking on.

Now let it work, and don't ask too much of it. If the lights dim, an overload light comes on, or the engine bogs down, you've simply piled on more than it can carry — unplug something small, like a space heater or a kettle, and it will steady right back down. Remember you can **cycle** it, too: run it a few hours to cool the fridge and charge the phones, then shut it off to save fuel and let the cold coast.

! Never bring it closer, and never overnight

No matter how loud the wind or how cold the night, the generator stays outside and 20 feet out — never coax it nearer to quiet it or keep it dry. And never leave it running overnight while everyone sleeps near the house; the safe rhythm is to run it while you're awake to mind it.

After the storm: shutting down and staying safe

When the wind dies down and the power flickers back, there are a few calm, careful steps to close things out safely — and one serious hazard outside to respect while you do.

Shut the generator down gently. First unplug or switch off the things it's powering, so it isn't under load, then let it run for a moment to cool before you stop the engine. Turning it off under a heavy load is hard on the machine. Once the power company is back and steady, you can bring your appliances back onto house current and give the generator its rest.

Refuel only when it's cool. This one is worth saying plainly: never add gasoline to a generator that is running or still hot. Spilled fuel on a hot engine can catch fire in an instant. Always shut it off and give it several minutes to cool before you refuel, and do your fueling away from the exhaust. It's a small pause that prevents a serious burn.

Watch for downed power lines. After an Ohio wind or ice storm, lines and limbs come down, and this is the danger to take most seriously of all. Treat **every** downed line as live and deadly, even if it looks harmless and even if the power seems to be out. Never touch one, never drive over one, and never touch anything a line is touching — a fence, a puddle, a branch. Keep everyone, including children and pets, far back, at least the length of a school bus. Call your power company or 911 to report it, and let the professionals handle it.

! If a line is down, stay back and call it in

A downed line can be live and silent, and the ground around it dangerous, with no spark or sound to warn you. Get everyone well away, keep them away, and call the utility or 911. Never assume a line is dead — that assumption is exactly what gets people hurt.

When an outage stretches into days

Most Ohio outages are measured in hours, and your plan will carry you through them with room to spare. But every so often — after a derecho or a bad ice storm — the power stays off for days. Here's how to settle in and keep everyone safe and steady.

The first thing a long outage asks of you is to **ration your fuel**. This is where cycling the generator earns its keep: rather than running it around the clock, run it a few hours at a time to cool the fridge, warm the house, charge the phones, and fill the well tank, then shut it off and let all of that coast. A tank of gas stretched this way lasts far longer — which matters enormously when the stations are closed or their pumps are down too.

Next, **manage the temperature**. In a winter outage, pick one room to keep warm and gather the family there with blankets and layers; a single room is far easier to heat, and body warmth and togetherness do a lot. In a summer heat wave, do the opposite — stay low, shaded, and hydrated, and let the generator run a fan. Keep a close eye on anyone very young, very old, or unwell, for whom hard cold or heat is genuinely dangerous.

Finally, **lean on your neighbors and your community**. Check on the folks around you, especially those living alone, and let them check on you — an outage is far easier faced together. If your home grows too cold or too hot to be safe, don't tough it out: many towns open a **warming or cooling center**, and a night with family across town who kept their power is nothing to be ashamed of. Knowing when to leave is part of a good plan, not a failure of one.

★ A long outage is a marathon, not a sprint

Pace yourself, ration the fuel, keep everyone warm or cool and fed, and don't be a hero about staying put if it stops being safe. If you'd like help thinking through a multi-day plan for your home — especially out in the country — that's just the sort of thing I'm glad to sit down and work out with you.

Your storm-season questions, answered

The questions I hear most often from folks getting ready for storm season here in Portage County.

Q: How often should I really run my generator?

About once a month, for fifteen or twenty minutes, with something plugged in. That keeps the fuel fresh, the engine limber, and — most important — proves to you that it starts. A generator you've run recently is one you can trust when the storm comes.

Q: How much fuel should I keep on hand?

Enough to run the essentials, cycling the generator, for a couple of days — more out in the country, where restoration takes longer. Keep it fresh with stabilizer, rotate your supply, and store it safely outside your living space. If your unit takes propane, a spare tank or two keeps for years.

Q: Can I run the generator in my garage if I leave the door open?

No — never, not even with the door wide open. A generator's exhaust is carbon monoxide, an invisible gas that pools and seeps indoors and can kill. It runs outside only, at least 20 feet from the house, every single time. The carbon monoxide page explains why this rule never bends.

Q: The storm is coming and I've never started my generator. Now what?

Start it now, before the weather turns — today, in the calm. Give me a call if it won't cooperate or you're unsure of the steps; I would far rather walk you through it on a sunny afternoon than have you fighting it in the dark.

Q: Do I need to power my whole house?

Almost certainly not. Most homes stay perfectly comfortable running just the essentials — the fridge, some heat, a few lights, phones, and out in the country the well pump. Deciding that short list ahead of time is the heart of a good storm plan.

Q: A power line is down in my yard. What do I do?

Stay well away from it and keep everyone else away too, including children and pets, and treat it as live even if the power's out. Don't touch it or anything it's touching. Call your power company or 911 to report it, and let them handle it.

Your storm-day game plan

When the lights go out, it helps to have the whole plan on a single page, in the order you'd actually do it. Here it is — calm, simple, and already decided.

- **1. Note the time and stay calm.** Jot down when the power went out. Your food-safety clock starts now, and a clear head is your best tool.
- **2. Grab your light.** Flashlights and a lantern first, so everyone can see. Switch on the battery radio for weather and news.
- **3. Set up the generator outside.** At least 20 feet from the house, exhaust pointed away, on level ground. Never in the garage or basement.
- **4. Run your cord and power your list.** Start the biggest item first, then add the rest — fridge and freezer, heat, water, medical needs, then lights and phones.
- **5. Cycle it to save fuel.** Run a few hours, then shut it off and let the cold and the warmth coast. Fire it up again as needed.
- **6. Keep everyone comfortable.** Gather in one room, keep the fridge doors shut, and check on family and neighbors.
- **7. When it's over, shut down safely.** Unplug the loads, let it cool, refuel only when cool, and steer well clear of any downed lines.

That's the whole night in seven steps. Tape this page inside a cabinet door next to the readiness checklist, and when the wind kicks up you won't have to think — you'll just work the plan you already made.

★ You've got this

Every step here is something you can do. You've prepared, you have a plan, and you have my number if anything feels uncertain. That's what readiness really buys you: not a perfect night, but a calm and safe one. Call anytime at (330) 200-8042.

How I can help

Getting ready for storm season is exactly the kind of practical, no-pressure help I love giving folks around Portage County — a friendly hand to make sure you're set before the weather turns, so you're never caught out in the dark.

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 the parts that touch your home's wiring — hooking a generator to your furnace or a 240-volt well pump through a proper transfer switch — I'm not a licensed electrician, so I'll bring one in and coordinate the whole job. You get one friendly point of contact, and the work gets done right and to code.

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.

Make readiness a habit, all year

Readiness isn't a one-time chore — it's a light, easy rhythm you keep up across the year, so you're never caught flat-footed no matter which season sends the storm.

The simplest way to stay ready is to tie a few checks to times you'll remember. **Each spring**, before summer's thunderstorms and derechos arrive, give your generator a good once-over: change the oil if it's due, run it under load for a while, refresh your stored fuel, and restock the batteries in your flashlights and radio. **Each fall**, before the ice and wind of winter, do the same — and add cold-weather touches like extra blankets in the storm bin and a check that the propane is topped up if you use it.

Between those two seasonal checks, keep the one habit that matters most: **run the generator about once a month**. Tie it to something you already do — the first Saturday, or the day you pay a certain bill — so it becomes automatic. Fifteen or twenty minutes with something plugged in keeps the fuel fresh, the engine happy, and your confidence high.

It helps to keep a simple written record, too. A little log — a note on the calendar or a card taped to the generator — of when you last ran it, changed the oil, and refreshed the fuel takes all the remembering off your shoulders. A glance tells you exactly where you stand, and whether anything's due.

✓ Spring check, fall check, monthly run

That's the entire rhythm in six words. Two seasonal once-overs and a short monthly run keep you ready through every kind of Ohio weather, with almost no effort. Put the dates on the calendar today and let the calendar do the remembering.

Your before-the-storm readiness checklist

Tear this page out and tape it inside a cabinet door. A calm afternoon spent checking these off is what a comfortable, safe outage is made of.

- ☐ Generator started within the last month, so you know it runs.
- ☐ Fresh fuel on hand, stabilized, with your supply rotated (or a full propane tank).
- ☐ Oil checked and topped to the mark.
- ☐ One or two heavy-duty outdoor extension cords, coiled and ready.
- ☐ Working carbon-monoxide alarms inside, tested, with fresh batteries.
- ☐ Flashlights, a battery radio, spare batteries, and charged power banks in one bin.
- ☐ A few days of no-cook food, drinking water, and any needed medication set aside.
- ☐ For well homes: several days of water stored, and a plan to fill jugs before a storm.
- ☐ Your short priority list decided — what you'll power, and in what order.
- ☐ A family plan: who starts it, where the gear and manual live, and the numbers to call.

Ten check marks stand between you and a genuinely comfortable outage. None of them is hard, and none costs much — a quiet hour on a nice day is all it takes. Work through them before storm season, keep this list where you'll see it, and whatever the sky decides to do next, you and your family will be ready for it.

The short version

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

- Ohio's storms come every year — summer thunderstorms and derechos, winter ice and wind — so readiness is a when, not an if.
- Get ready before the storm, not during: fresh fuel with stabilizer, oil checked, cords ready, and a test run so you know it starts.
- Decide your short priority list ahead of time — safety first, then food, then lights and phones — and make a family plan everyone knows.
- Run it outside only, 20 feet from the house, with working CO alarms inside. Refuel only when cool, and never touch a downed line — call the utility.
- In town, plan for a comfortable evening or two but be ready for a rare long one; in the country, keep more in reserve. And I'm a phone call away.

Your Storm-Readiness at a Glance

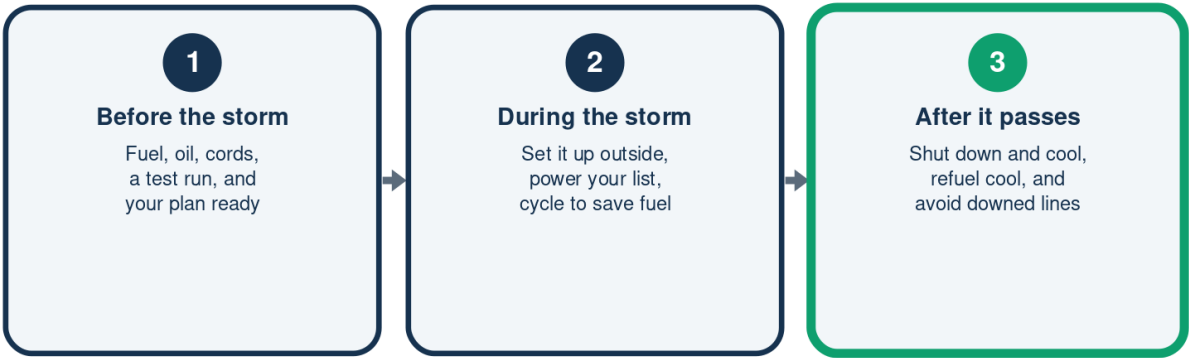
A quick check before the season

Get it ready		What it buys you
Test run	Start it monthly	You know it works
Fuel and oil	Fresh, stabilized	It starts and runs
Cords	Heavy-duty, outdoor	Power reaches inside
CO alarms	Tested, fresh	Everyone stays safe
Your priorities	A short list ready	No hard choices later
Water and food	A few days stored	Comfort through days

A calm hour before the storm is what an easy outage is made of.

Before, During, and After

The rhythm of a storm outage



Do the work before, and during and after take care of themselves.

In Town vs. On a Well

Two ways to get ready

	In town	On a well
Typical outage	Often shorter	Can run for days
Biggest worry	Food and comfort	Water and heat
What to store	A day or two	Several days
Generator size	Often smaller	Larger for the pump
Lean on	Quick restoration	Self-reliance

Both plans start the same way: a generator you know will start.

What Does Your Home Need Most?

Match the plan to your home

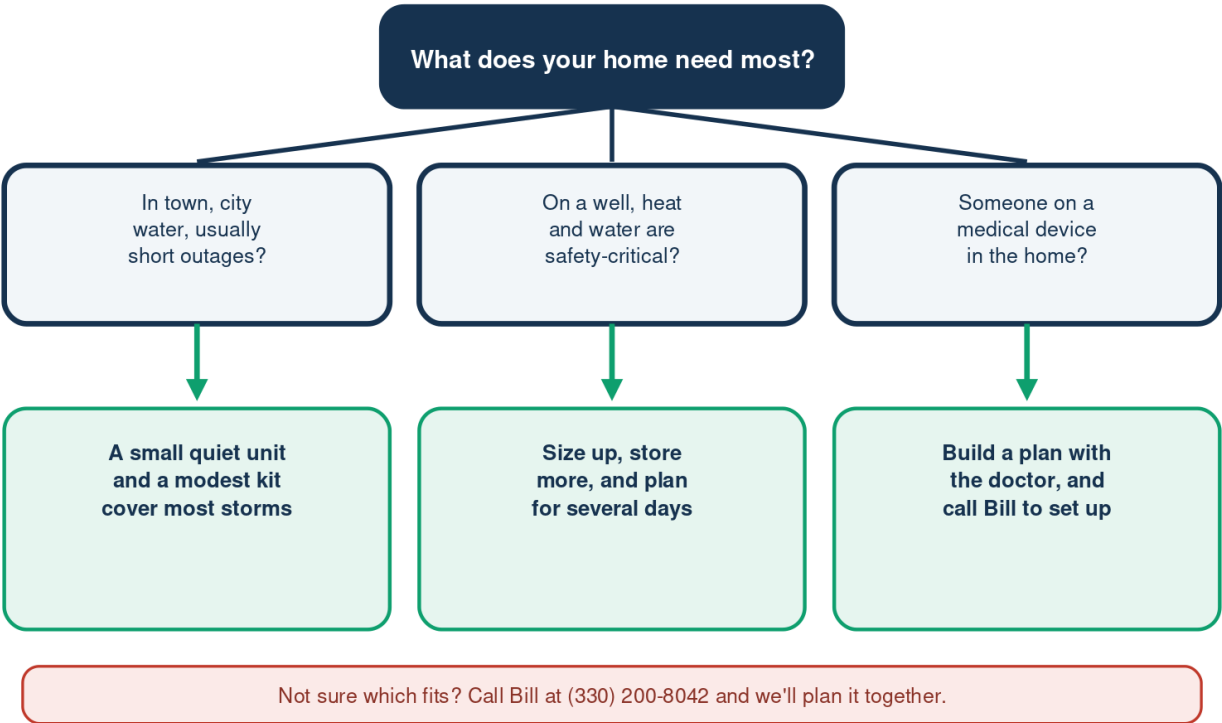


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

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