



An Extended Guide · No. 1250

Carbon Monoxide Safety

The one safety guide to read twice

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Hello, and welcome

If you own a generator, or you're thinking about one, this is the guide I most want you to read — because it's about the one danger worth taking seriously, and the good news is that it's completely avoidable.

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 talk about what carbon monoxide is and why a generator makes it, how folks actually get into trouble, and the handful of simple, unbending habits that keep your family safe — where to run it, how far away, the alarms that watch your back, and exactly what to do if one ever sounds. No scare tactics, no jargon — just calm, clear steps you can follow every single time.

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.

What carbon monoxide really is

Before the rules, let's understand what we're up against — because once you see why it's dangerous, the rules make perfect sense.

Carbon monoxide — often written as "CO" — is a gas that's made any time a fuel like gasoline or propane burns. It comes out in the exhaust, the same as it does from a car's tailpipe. Out in the wide-open air it drifts off and mixes away harmlessly. The trouble starts only when it's allowed to build up in one place.

What makes it so sneaky is that you cannot sense it at all. It has no color, no smell, and no taste. There's no warning cough, no sting in the eyes, no whiff of something burning. You could be breathing a dangerous amount and have no way of knowing — and that is exactly why it's earned the nickname "the invisible killer."

Here's the plain reason it hurts you: carbon monoxide keeps your blood from carrying the oxygen your body needs. As it builds up, your brain and heart are quietly starved of oxygen, which is why the early signs feel so much like an ordinary headache or a spell of being worn out. More on those signs later — for now, just hold onto one idea.

! The one thing to remember

Carbon monoxide is invisible and gives no warning of its own. That's not a reason to be afraid of your generator — it's the reason we lean on simple habits and a good alarm instead of our own senses. The rules in this guide are what keep you safe, because your nose never will.

Why a generator gives off so much

A generator isn't dangerous because it's poorly made. It gives off carbon monoxide for the very same reason your car does — it runs an engine that burns fuel.

Inside every gasoline or propane generator is a small engine, not so different from the one in a lawn mower or a car. When it burns fuel to make electricity, the exhaust that comes out the back carries carbon monoxide with it. This is true of every fuel-burning generator ever made, no matter the brand, the size, or the price. It's simply the nature of a running engine.

You'd never start your car and let it idle in a closed garage — everyone knows those fumes are dangerous. A generator is the exact same situation, and it deserves the exact same respect. The only real difference is that a generator often runs for hours, or even days, during a storm, which gives the fumes plenty of time to build up if it's in the wrong spot.

I don't tell you this to frighten you off. A generator is a wonderful thing to have when the power's out, and run properly it's perfectly safe. The point is simply this: the exhaust is the whole danger, so everything we do from here is about making sure that exhaust always has somewhere safe to go — up and away, into the open air, far from where you're breathing.

★ Cleaner is better; it is never a free pass

You may hear that a certain generator runs "cleaner" or is "low-emission." That may well be true, and it's a fine thing — but it does not mean it's safe to run indoors or up against the house. Every fuel generator makes plenty of carbon monoxide in an enclosed space. Cleaner is better; it is never a reason to bend the rules.

How people actually get hurt (part 1)

Almost every generator tragedy comes down to one thing: the machine was running somewhere it shouldn't have been. Let's walk through the real situations, calmly, so you'll recognize them a mile away.

The most common one is running a generator in the garage. It's an understandable temptation — the garage keeps the unit out of the rain, out of sight, and a little quieter. But a garage is an enclosed space, and carbon monoxide fills it up quickly and then seeps right through the wall into the house, even up into the bedrooms.

Here's the part that surprises people most: leaving the garage door open does not make it safe. Neither does opening a window. The fumes still build up faster than a doorway can clear them, especially once the door is even partly down or the wind shifts. "But the door was open" appears in far too many of these sad stories. An open door is not fresh air.

The same goes for a basement, a shed, a barn, a carport, or a covered porch. Any space with a roof and walls around it — even a roomy one, even one that feels drafty — can trap enough carbon monoxide to be deadly. If it has a ceiling over it, it is not a place to run a generator. Full stop.

! Enclosed means enclosed

A garage with the door up, a shed with a window open, a porch that feels breezy — none of these count as outdoors. Carbon monoxide doesn't need a sealed room to reach a dangerous level; it just needs walls and a roof to gather under. The only safe place for a running generator is out in the genuine open air.

How people actually get hurt (part 2)

The second family of trouble is subtler: the generator is technically outdoors, but still too close to the house, or covered up in a way that traps the fumes.

Too close to the house. A generator sitting right against an outside wall, or on the back step, or just outside the kitchen door, can still send its exhaust straight into the home through a window, a door, a dryer vent, or a fresh-air intake. Being "outside" isn't enough on its own if the fumes are landing three feet from a window. Distance is what lets them scatter and thin out safely.

Exhaust aimed at the house. Even a generator well out in the yard can cause trouble if its exhaust is pointed toward the building. The fumes drift the way they're aimed, so a unit turned the wrong way can funnel carbon monoxide right back at an open window. Which way it faces matters as much as how far away it sits.

Covered up to keep it dry. When rain or snow starts, the natural instinct is to throw a tarp over the generator, or tuck it into a little enclosure or under the deck. This is one of the most dangerous things you can do — a tarp or a box traps the exhaust in a pocket right around the machine, and the heat can start a fire besides. There's a right way to keep it dry, and we'll cover it soon.

! Outdoors, but still too close, is still dangerous

Getting the generator out of the garage is only half the job. Out in the open, at least 20 feet away, exhaust pointed away from the house, and never under a tarp — that's the full picture. Every one of these near-misses is prevented by the two simple rules on the next pages.

Rule one: outside only, every time

There are really only two rules to remember, and this is the first. A generator runs outdoors, in the open air, and nowhere else — not ever, not for a minute, not in a pinch.

We've seen why: any space with walls and a roof lets carbon monoxide gather to a dangerous level, and it does it faster than you'd ever guess. So the safe habit is beautifully simple. Before you pull the starter cord, ask yourself one question: "Is this spot truly outdoors, in open air?" If the answer is anything but a clear yes, the answer is no.

That rules out the garage — door up or down. It rules out the basement, the shed, the barn, the carport, the breezeway, and the covered porch. It rules out running it just inside the garage door "for a few minutes" while you get set up. It even rules out an attached sunroom or a screened porch. When in doubt, carry it further out. You will never regret being too far outdoors.

I know it can feel like a nuisance in bad weather to haul the unit well clear of the house and leave it out in the elements. But this is the rule that has saved the most lives, and it's the one I'll never soften. The generator lives outside while it runs. Everything else in this guide is built on that foundation.

! The "just for a minute" trap

Most of the worst outcomes started with "I only ran it inside for a little while." Carbon monoxide can build to a harmful level surprisingly fast in an enclosed space — there is no safe short amount of time to run a generator indoors. Not to warm it up, not to get out of the rain, not ever. Outside only, from the first pull of the cord.

Rule two: 20 feet out, exhaust pointed away

Outdoors is the first half. The second half is far enough out, and turned the right way. The common guidance is to keep a running generator at least 20 feet from the house.

Twenty feet gives the exhaust room to spread out and mix into the open air before it can reach a door, a window, or a vent. Up close, the fumes are concentrated; out at twenty feet, they've had space to thin down to nothing. If you can comfortably manage more than twenty feet, even better — but treat twenty as the minimum, not a target to shave down on a cold night.

Just as important is which way the exhaust points. Turn the generator so its exhaust blows **away** from the house — away from every door, window, dryer vent, soffit vent, and fresh-air intake. Picture where the fumes will drift and make sure it's out toward the open yard, never back toward the walls. A unit twenty feet out but aimed at the bedroom window is still a hazard.

And don't forget your surroundings. Twenty feet from your own house is the rule — but also look for a neighbor's windows, an attached garage, a window well, or a low basement vent where heavier air can pool. The goal is a clear, open patch of ground where the exhaust has nothing to do but drift up and away and disappear.

✓ Measure it once, mark it, and you're set

Twenty feet is about five big steps, or the length of a couple of cars parked end to end. Pace it out once in good weather, pick your spot, and maybe set a paver or a stake there. Then on the night of a storm you're not guessing in the dark — you just carry the generator to the spot you already know is safe.

Picking your safe spot ahead of time

The best time to choose where the generator goes is a calm afternoon — not in the wind and rain with a flashlight in your teeth. Let's find your spot now.

Walk out to where you think the generator might sit and look back at the house. You want open ground at least twenty feet from any wall, with the exhaust side facing out toward the yard, a field, or the driveway — away from the building. A patch of the back yard, the far end of a driveway, or an open side yard often works well.

Now look for the things to **avoid**. Steer clear of any door or window, of course, but also the low vents: a dryer vent, a fresh-air intake for the furnace, a crawlspace or basement vent, an air-conditioner unit, and especially a window well, where heavier air can settle and pool. Give all of those a wide berth, and keep the spot clear of dry leaves or brush, since the exhaust runs hot.

Think about the ground, too. You want a firm, level surface so the unit sits steady and can't tip — a bit of patio, a paver, or packed earth, not soft mud or a slope. And picture your extension cords: they'll run from that spot back to the house, so a route that doesn't cross a walkway or a puddle is ideal. Pick it once, and it's one less thing to think about when the lights go out.

★ Not sure where your safe spot is? I'll help you find it

Every home is laid out a little differently, and it's not always obvious where the vents and intakes are. If you'd like, I'm glad to come out, walk your yard with you, help you settle on a safe, sensible spot for the generator, and mark it — so you're ready before the next storm. Just call (330) 200-8042.

Carbon-monoxide alarms: your safety net

The rules keep the fumes away from the house. A carbon-monoxide alarm is your backup — the one thing that can sense what your nose cannot, and warn you in time.

A carbon-monoxide alarm looks a lot like a smoke alarm, and many newer ones do both jobs in a single unit. It quietly watches the air and sounds a loud alarm if carbon monoxide starts to build up. Because you can't see or smell the gas yourself, this little device is genuinely the thing standing between a problem and a warning. Every home with any fuel-burning appliance ought to have them, generator or not.

For generator use, one feature matters most: **battery backup**. An alarm that only plugs into the wall is no help at all during a power outage — which is exactly when your generator is running. Choose alarms with a battery backup, or the kind that runs entirely on a long-life battery, so they keep watch even when the grid is down. This one detail is easy to overlook and absolutely essential.

You want carbon-monoxide alarms on **every level** of the home, and especially near the bedrooms, since the most dangerous time is while everyone's asleep. If your house has a basement, a main floor, and an upstairs, that's at least one on each — more if the bedrooms are spread out. They're inexpensive and easy to find, and there's no better dollar spent on generator safety.

! No alarm? Then no generator — yet

If you're planning to run a generator this storm season and you don't have working carbon-monoxide alarms inside, please put this guide down and get them first. It's that important. A generator without a CO alarm in the house is the one setup I'd ask you never to run. Fresh batteries, every level, near the bedrooms — then you're ready.

Testing and replacing your alarms

An alarm only protects you if it actually works — and unlike your nose, an alarm can wear out or run down without saying a word. A few easy habits keep them honest.

Test them now, not during the storm. Every carbon-monoxide alarm has a test button. Press it until it sounds to confirm the horn and the battery are good. A fine habit is to test them when you test your smoke alarms — say, when the clocks change in spring and fall. Do it before storm season, so you're not discovering a dead battery on the night you need it.

Fresh batteries. If the alarm takes a replaceable battery, put a new one in at least once a year, and change it right away if the unit ever chirps its low-battery warning. Never borrow the battery out of a CO alarm for something else "just for now" — that now has a way of lasting until it matters most.

Mind the replace-by date. Here's the one most folks don't know: a carbon-monoxide alarm's sensor doesn't last forever. The whole unit is meant to be replaced after a number of years — the date is usually printed right on the back, or the alarm will beep a certain way to tell you it's time. When that day comes, replace the whole alarm, not just the battery. An expired sensor can quietly stop sensing.

✓ Write the date where you'll see it

When you put up a new carbon-monoxide alarm, take a marker and write the replace-by date right on the front, big enough to read from the floor. Then you'll never have to guess how old it is or wonder whether it's still doing its job. Simple, and it takes ten seconds.

Generators that shut themselves off

Here's a genuinely good piece of news. Many newer generators come with a built-in safety feature that watches for carbon monoxide and shuts the engine off on its own if it senses trouble.

The feature goes by different names depending on the maker, but the idea is the same: a small sensor on the generator itself keeps an eye on the air right around the machine, and if carbon monoxide starts building up nearby — say, because the unit ended up too close to the house or in a partly enclosed spot — it cuts the engine before the gas can reach a dangerous level. Units with this feature are usually built to a safety standard called **PGMA G300** or **UL 2201**; you'll see it noted on the box or in the listing.

I recommend one of these units warmly. Safety experts estimate that generators built to these standards would prevent the large majority of generator carbon-monoxide deaths — that's a real and meaningful protection, and if you're shopping for a generator, it belongs near the top of the features worth having.

But here's the part I want to be very clear about. This sensor is a **seatbelt, not a free pass**. It does not make it safe to run the generator in the garage, or up against the house, or under a tarp. You still follow every rule in this guide — outside only, twenty feet out, exhaust pointed away — every single time. The shutoff is there to save you if something goes wrong, not to let you skip the habits that keep things from going wrong in the first place.

! A backup, never a substitute

Think of the CO shutoff the way you think of a smoke detector: wonderful to have, and you still don't play with matches. Buy the feature if you can, be grateful it's there — and then run the generator exactly as if it weren't, outside and well away, every time. Belt and suspenders is the whole idea.

The warning signs to know by heart

Because you can't see or smell carbon monoxide, the way it usually announces itself is through how people feel. Knowing these signs — and taking them seriously — can make all the difference.

The early symptoms of carbon-monoxide exposure are, unfortunately, easy to brush off, because they feel like so many ordinary things. The common ones to watch for are: a **headache**, feeling **dizzy** or lightheaded, **nausea** or an upset stomach, **weakness** or unusual tiredness, feeling oddly **sleepy**, and **confusion** or trouble thinking clearly.

What makes it dangerous is exactly that these feel so familiar. It's the flu. It's a headache from the stress of the storm. It's just being tired from a long day. That's the trap — the very symptoms that should send you outside are the ones easiest to explain away and sleep off. So here's the rule that cuts through it: if a generator is running and anyone starts to feel any of these, treat carbon monoxide as the cause until proven otherwise.

Pay special attention when **more than one person** feels unwell at the same time, or when the **pets** seem sick or sluggish too — animals are often affected first. And be extra alert if the bad feeling eases when you step outside and comes back when you go in. That pattern is carbon monoxide waving a flag. Don't wait to be sure. On the next page is exactly what to do.

! When in doubt, blame the CO

You will never do harm by treating a headache as possible carbon monoxide and stepping out into fresh air. The mistake that hurts people is the other way around — explaining the symptoms away and staying put. If the generator's running and something feels off, get to fresh air first and ask questions later.

Exactly what to do if the alarm sounds

If a carbon-monoxide alarm goes off, or someone feels those symptoms while a generator is running, there's a clear, simple order to follow. Learn it now so you don't have to think it up in the moment.

First, get everyone outside — right away. Everyone in the house goes out into fresh air immediately: people and pets, out the door, into the open. This comes before anything else. Don't stop to gather things, don't finish what you were doing, don't investigate. The single most important action is fresh air in your lungs, and every second counts.

Do not stop to open windows or hunt for the cause. It's a natural instinct to want to air the place out or figure out what's wrong — please resist it. Opening windows wastes precious time and keeps you in the bad air; finding the source is the fire department's job, not yours. Out first, always. The house can wait; you cannot.

Then call 911 from outside. Once you're out in fresh air and you've counted heads to be sure everyone's with you, call 911 and tell them you suspect carbon monoxide. Stay outside. Do not go back in for any reason — not for a phone, not for a pet you think is still inside (tell the responders instead) — until the fire department says the air is safe. Let the professionals check it and clear it.

! Fresh air first, every single time

The whole response in one line: get out, stay out, call 911 from outside. Not open a window, not look for the leak, not finish the chore — out into fresh air first, then call for help and let them handle the rest. If you remember only one page in this guide in an emergency, let it be this one.

Running it safely in rain and snow

Storms are exactly when you need the generator, and exactly when the weather tempts you to break the rules to keep it dry. Here's how to do both — stay safe and keep it running.

First, the thing not to do: never tuck a running generator under a tarp, into a box, under the deck, or into any little shelter that wraps around it. It's a completely understandable urge — you don't want the machine getting rained on — but covering it that way traps the exhaust in a pocket right where you'll be standing, and the heat can start a fire besides. A generator must never run inside an enclosure of any kind, including a makeshift one.

The right answer is a **proper generator cover** — sometimes called a running cover, a canopy, or a tent — made specifically for the purpose. These are open and vented: they shield the unit from rain and snow from above while leaving the sides open so the exhaust can escape and fresh air can reach the engine. They're inexpensive, they set up over the unit, and they let you keep the generator running through a downpour without ever bringing it closer to the house.

A few more wet-weather habits: keep your hands dry when you touch the generator or plug things in, set the unit on a spot that won't turn into a puddle, and never, ever solve the rain problem by moving the generator into the garage. The weather is a reason to use the right cover — it is never a reason to bring the machine indoors.

! A tarp is not a cover

The difference is everything: a tarp or a box wraps around the generator and traps the fumes; a proper running cover sits over it like a little roof with the sides open. One is dangerous, the other is made for the job. If a storm's coming, get a real vented cover ahead of time — don't improvise one when the rain starts.

Why nighttime is the most dangerous

If there's a moment when carbon monoxide is at its most dangerous, it's while everyone is asleep. It's worth understanding why, and how to run the generator safely overnight.

The danger of sleep is simple and sobering: the early warning signs — the headache, the dizziness, the sleepiness — can't do their job if you're already unconscious. A person who is awake feels unwell and steps outside. A person who is asleep may simply drift from ordinary sleep into something far more serious without ever waking up. That's why so many of the worst outcomes happen overnight, and why nighttime deserves extra care.

This is where your alarms truly earn their keep. A working carbon-monoxide alarm near the bedrooms is the thing that will wake you when your own body can't — which is the whole reason we insist on battery-backup alarms near where you sleep. Before you run a generator overnight, be certain those alarms are in place, tested, and have good batteries. They are your watchman while you rest.

If you'll be running the generator through the night, give the setup extra margin: place it a good bit farther than the minimum if you can, double-check the exhaust is pointed well away from any bedroom window, and make sure everyone knows the get-out plan. And if anyone in the home is a particularly heavy sleeper, or hard of hearing, look into alarms with a louder horn or a bed-shaker made for that purpose.

! Never run one indoors overnight — not even close

Everything about running a generator indoors is dangerous; doing it while people sleep is the most dangerous of all. No garage, no basement, no breezeway overnight, not ever, no matter the weather. Outside and well away, with tested alarms near the bedrooms watching over everyone — that's the only safe way to run through the night.

If you live in town: city and suburb

Here in town — in Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro, Aurora — houses sit close together, and that adds one wrinkle to carbon-monoxide safety that country folks don't face: your generator's exhaust is near your neighbors' windows, too.

When you set up in a close neighborhood, the twenty-foot rule is about your own house and your neighbor's. A generator on the property line, or tucked between two homes, can send its fumes straight into the house next door — including a bedroom where someone's asleep and has no idea your generator is even running. So when you pick your spot, look at their windows and vents as carefully as your own.

Aim for an open spot — the driveway, the middle of the back yard — that keeps the generator at least twenty feet from every home around you, with the exhaust pointed out toward the street or an open space, not toward anyone's walls. In a tight lot that can take some thought, and it's worth doing. A neighbor may not know to worry about your generator, so the looking-out falls to you.

It's also a kindness to let the folks next door know you'll be running a generator during a long outage, and to make sure they have working carbon-monoxide alarms of their own. In a storm, neighbors often share and help each other out — and a quick heads-up about where the generator sits is part of being a good one.

! Apartments, condos, and shared garages

If you're in an apartment, a condo, or a townhouse with a shared or attached garage, running a generator safely is often genuinely impractical — there's rarely a spot twenty feet from every unit's windows, and a shared garage is absolutely off-limits. In that case a quiet battery power station that charges indoors is usually the safer tool. I'm glad to help you weigh it.

If you're in the country on a well

Out in the townships — Atwater, Rootstown, Deerfield, Palmyra — you've got room to spare, which makes the placement rules easy. But country living adds its own carbon-monoxide wrinkles, and they're worth naming.

The good news first: with a big yard, getting the generator well away from the house and pointed out toward open ground is usually no trouble at all. Use that space generously — there's no reason to run it close when you've got a whole field to work with. Farther is always safer.

The harder truth is distance from help. An isolated home is farther from the fire department and the ambulance, so if carbon monoxide ever did build up, help is more minutes away — which makes your alarms and your family's get-out plan matter even more, not less. Out in the country, your carbon-monoxide alarms aren't a nicety; they're the part of the system doing the most work. Put them on every level, near the bedrooms, and keep them tested.

And here's the temptation to name plainly: on a cold, wet night, the barn, the pole building, the garage, or the well house look awfully inviting as a place to run the generator out of the weather. Please don't. Every one of those is an enclosed space, and the rule doesn't bend just because the nearest neighbor is a mile away — if anything, being far from help makes it matter more. Use a proper vented cover and keep the machine outside.

★ Well water, the generator, and staying safe

Many country homes want a generator for the well pump, so the water keeps running in an outage — and that's a great reason to have one. Just remember the pump is a bigger job that usually means a larger unit and an electrician, and none of it changes the CO rules. I can help you plan the whole thing safely — the right unit, the right spot, the hookup done by a pro. Call me at (330) 200-8042.

Common myths, gently corrected

A few comfortable-sounding ideas about generators and carbon monoxide have a way of getting passed around. Each one has gotten people hurt, so let's set them straight — kindly, but plainly.

Q: "It's fine if I crack a window or open the garage door."

No — this is the most common and most dangerous myth of all. An open window or door cannot clear carbon monoxide fast enough; the fumes still build to a harmful level. An enclosed space is unsafe with the door wide open. Outside only, always.

Q: "I'll only run it for a few minutes."

There's no safe short time to run a generator in an enclosed space. Carbon monoxide can reach a dangerous level surprisingly quickly, and 'just a few minutes' is how many of these stories begin. Time doesn't make indoors safe.

Q: "A fan will blow the fumes out."

A fan just stirs the bad air around — it can't turn an enclosed space into safe outdoor air, and it may even push fumes deeper into the house. Ventilation is not a substitute for being outside. Fresh open air is the only answer.

Q: "My generator is new and low-emission, so it's safer indoors."

A cleaner-running unit is a fine thing, but every fuel generator makes plenty of carbon monoxide. Newer and cleaner never means safe indoors. The rules are exactly the same for the newest unit as the oldest.

! When the shortcut and the rule disagree, follow the rule

Every one of these myths is a shortcut that feels reasonable in the moment, especially in bad weather. That's exactly why they're dangerous. When a tempting idea bumps up against the outside-only rule, the rule wins — every time, no exceptions.

A simple family plan, and a practice run

Safety sticks best when the whole household knows it — not just the person who runs the generator. A few minutes making a simple plan means everyone knows what to do, even if you're not the one home.

Sit down with your family and cover the basics together. Everyone should know three things: that the generator runs outside only and never comes indoors; what the carbon-monoxide alarm sounds like and how it's different from the smoke alarm; and the one response — get outside to fresh air first, then call 911 from outside. Write it on a card and stick it on the fridge if that helps it stick.

Pick a spot to gather. Just like a fire plan, choose a meeting place outside — the mailbox, the end of the driveway, a neighbor's porch — so that if the alarm ever sounds, everyone heads to the same place and you can count heads quickly. Knowing where to go removes the panic and the guesswork in the moment that matters most.

Then do a gentle practice run. Press the test button on the carbon-monoxide alarm so everyone, including the grandkids, knows the sound. Walk through it: if you ever hear this, we go straight outside to the mailbox, and we don't go back in. No drama, no fear — just a calm rehearsal, the way you'd practice a fire drill. Do it once and it's in everyone's bones.

✓ Especially if someone lives alone

If you or a loved one lives alone, this plan matters even more, because there's no one else to notice something's wrong. Make sure the alarms are loud and near the bedroom, keep a phone within reach, and let a neighbor or family member know when the generator's running. A quick check-in call during a long outage is a fine and simple habit.

How I can help

Carbon-monoxide safety isn't complicated, but it is important to get right — and if you'd feel better having someone walk through it with you, in your own home and your own yard, that's exactly the kind of thing I do.

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.

The one part I'll always hand to a licensed electrician is connecting a generator to your home's wiring — a transfer switch for the furnace or a well pump. That's their trade, not mine, and I'll coordinate it for you. Everything else — picking a safe unit, finding your spot, setting up the alarms, teaching the whole family — is right in my wheelhouse.

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 carbon-monoxide safety checklist

Tear this page out and tape it inside a cabinet door, right by where the generator's stored. Run down it before every use, and you've covered the whole guide in eight lines.

- ☐ The generator is outdoors, in genuine open air — never a garage, shed, basement, or covered porch, not even with a door open.
- ☐ It's at least 20 feet from the house, and from the neighbors' homes too.
- ☐ The exhaust is pointed away from every door, window, and vent.
- ☐ It's not under a tarp or in an enclosure — only a proper open, vented cover if it's wet.
- ☐ Working carbon-monoxide alarms are on every level and near the bedrooms, tested, with fresh batteries.
- ☐ The alarms are within their replace-by date (written on the front).
- ☐ Everyone in the home knows the get-out plan and the outside meeting spot.
- ☐ A phone is handy, outside, in case you ever need to call 911.

Eight checkmarks, and you've done everything this guide asks. That's all it takes to turn the one real danger of a generator into something you've simply, calmly handled.

The short version

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

- Every fuel generator makes carbon monoxide — invisible, odorless, and dangerous only when it's allowed to build up. Outdoors, it drifts away harmlessly.
- Two rules cover almost everything: run it outside only (never any enclosed space, even with a door open), and keep it at least 20 feet out with the exhaust pointed away.
- Put working, battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on every level and near the bedrooms — they sense what you can't, especially while you sleep.
- A CO-shutoff generator is well worth buying, but it's a seatbelt, not a free pass — you still follow every rule, every time.
- If an alarm sounds or anyone feels headachy, dizzy, or sick: everyone outside to fresh air first, then call 911 from outside. Don't stop to open windows or hunt for the cause.

The Carbon Monoxide Rules at a Glance

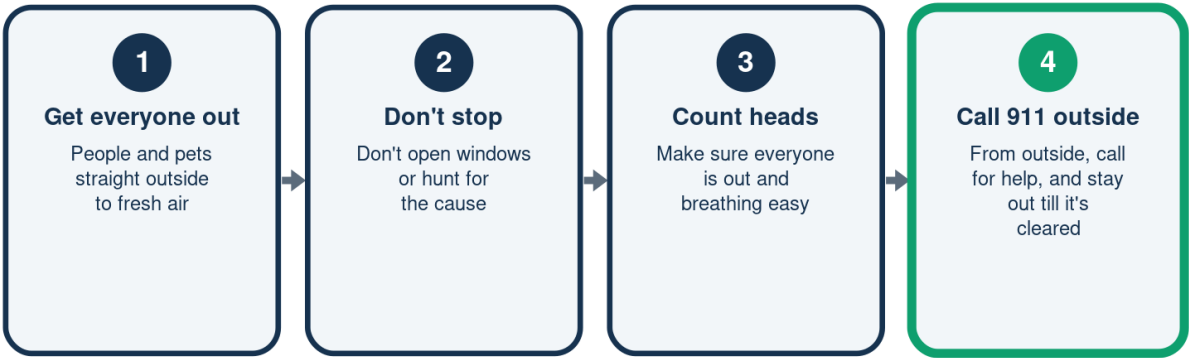
The whole safety guide on one page

	What to do	Why it matters
Where to run it	Outdoors only	It builds up fast inside
How far	20 feet from the house	Room for fumes to scatter
Which way	Exhaust pointed away	Off doors and windows
Alarms	Inside, every level	They warn you in time
If in doubt	Get out, fresh air	Then call 911 outside

Outside, 20 feet out, exhaust away, alarms inside — the habits that keep everyone safe.

If the Carbon Monoxide Alarm Sounds

Four steps, in order — know them by heart



Fresh air first, every time. The house can wait; your lungs cannot.

Safe Spot or Danger Spot?

Where the generator can and can't go

	The danger spot	The safe spot
Garage or shed	Never, even door open	Out in open air
By the house	Fumes reach windows	20 feet or more away
Under a tarp	Traps the exhaust	Open, vented cover
Exhaust aim	At a door or window	Away from the house
Near vents	By a vent or AC unit	Clear of openings

Getting it out of the garage is only half the job — far enough and aimed away is the rest.

Where Can I Run It?

Three spots, three answers

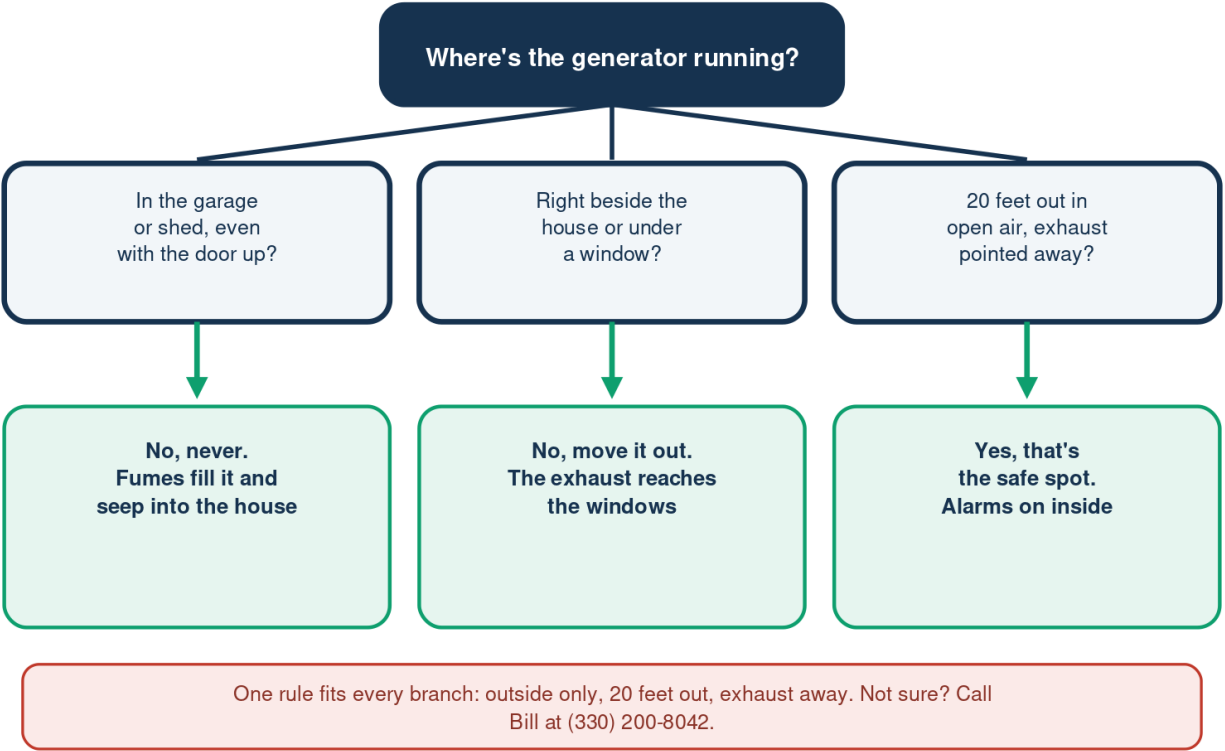


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

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