



An Extended Guide · No. 1731

Never Run a Generator Indoors

The deadly danger, and the
indoor-safe alternative

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — this is not medical advice

This guide is about keeping the power on — it is not medical advice, and it is not a substitute for a plan made with the people who know your health. Make your backup-power plan together with your doctor and your equipment supplier, and follow their guidance on your specific device, its settings, and how much backup you need. Register ahead of time on your electric utility's medical or priority-restoration list. And please never rely on a backup battery alone for life-sustaining equipment: a battery buys you time, it does not replace care. If the power is out and anyone's health is at risk — trouble breathing, chest pain, confusion, or bluish lips — call 911, or get to a hospital or shelter that has power. This is the most important safety guide in the batch. A fuel-burning generator must never run indoors — its exhaust can kill — while a battery power station is safe right beside the bed.

The one rule that saves lives

If you take only one thing from this whole set of guides, let it be this: never run a gas or propane generator indoors, in a garage, or anywhere enclosed. Its exhaust is carbon monoxide, and it can kill in minutes.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I don't like to frighten people, but this is the one place I'll be very firm, because it matters that much. Generators are genuinely useful in a long outage — but only outdoors, well away from the house. Used any other way, they've taken lives, often people just trying to keep warm or keep equipment running.

The happy news for a medical household is that there's a backup that doesn't carry this danger at all: a battery power station. It makes no exhaust and no carbon monoxide, so it's safe to use right there in the bedroom. This guide covers both — the firm rule for generators, and the safe alternative.

★ I'll help you set up the safe way

I help folks choose an indoor-safe battery station and place any generator safely outdoors. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — safety is never a silly thing to ask about.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you'll keep your household safe.

- ❑ Never run a gas or propane generator indoors, in a garage, a shed, a basement, or on a porch.
- ❑ An open door and a fan do NOT make an enclosed space safe — outdoors only.
- ❑ Keep a running generator well away from the house — the safety agencies say at least 20 feet.
- ❑ Point the exhaust away from every window, door, and vent — yours and the neighbor's.
- ❑ A battery power station makes no fumes and is safe to use indoors, beside the bed.
- ❑ Put battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on every floor and outside the bedrooms.
- ❑ Know the symptoms: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, confusion, sleepiness.
- ❑ If an alarm sounds or anyone feels unwell, get to fresh air first, then call 911.

! This is the rule to memorize

Generators: outdoors only, 20 feet away, exhaust pointed away. Battery stations: safe indoors. That single distinction protects your family.

What carbon monoxide is, and why it's so dangerous

The danger is real precisely because you can't sense it coming.

Carbon monoxide — often written CO — is a gas made whenever fuel burns: gasoline, propane, natural gas, wood. It is completely invisible and has no smell, so your body gives you no warning. It works by crowding the oxygen out of your blood, which is why it can make someone sleepy and confused before they realize anything is wrong — and why it can kill in minutes at high levels. A generator's engine makes a great deal of it, which is exactly why it belongs outdoors.

CO from generators kills dozens of people every year in this country, very often from running one in a garage or too close to the house. Nearly every one of those tragedies was preventable with the simple rule in this guide.

! You cannot smell it or see it

Never trust your senses to warn you of carbon monoxide — there's nothing to smell or see. That's why the outdoor rule and working CO alarms matter so much.

The absolute rule for any fuel-burning generator

There is no exception, no clever workaround, no 'just this once.'

This is the heart of the whole guide, so I'll state it as plainly as I can and let the safety callout carry the details.

! A generator's exhaust is deadly — a battery is not

If your backup plan includes a gas- or propane-powered generator, remember that its exhaust contains carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill in minutes. Never run any fuel-burning generator indoors, in a garage, in a shed, in a basement, or on a porch, not even with a door open and a fan going. Run it outside only, well away from the house — the safety agencies say at least 20 feet — with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent. This is one big reason a battery power station suits medical equipment so well: it makes no exhaust at all, so it is safe to use right beside the bed, indoors. Put battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on every floor and outside the bedrooms, and if an alarm sounds or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone into fresh air first and ask questions later.

The places people wrongly think are safe

Most tragedies come from a spot that felt safe but wasn't.

The danger almost always comes from putting a generator somewhere that seems sheltered or convenient. None of these are safe, no matter how open they feel. Carbon monoxide seeps and lingers, and it finds its way indoors through doors, windows, and vents. When in doubt, move it farther out.

- An attached garage — even with the big door wide open. Never safe.
- A basement, a crawlspace, or a cellar. Never.
- A shed, a barn, a carport, or under a deck.
- A porch, a breezeway, or right up against the house near a window.

! A fan and an open door are not enough

Ventilation does not make an enclosed or attached space safe. The only safe place for a running generator is outside, well away from the house.

Far enough away, pointed the right way

Two things make an outdoor spot genuinely safe: distance and exhaust direction.

Outdoors is the rule, but not all outdoor spots are equal. Keep a running generator well away from the house — the safety agencies advise at least 20 feet — and turn it so the exhaust points away from the building, not toward it. Remember your neighbors too: their windows and vents matter as much as yours, especially in close quarters. And keep it out of the rain on a dry surface, under a running-rated cover if the weather's wet.

- At least 20 feet from the house, per the safety agencies.
- Exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent.
- Mindful of the neighbor's openings too, especially close in town.
- On a dry surface, out of the rain, under a proper cover if needed.

✓ Farther is always safer

Twenty feet is the minimum, not the goal. If you can place it farther from every window and door, do.

Carbon-monoxide alarms: your silent guardian

Because you can't sense CO, an alarm is what stands watch for you.

A working carbon-monoxide alarm is the one thing that can warn you when something's gone wrong. Put battery-backup CO alarms on every level of the home and just outside the sleeping areas, so one will wake you. Test them the way the maker recommends, and replace batteries and units on schedule. These are inexpensive, and for a household running any fuel-burning equipment nearby, they're not optional.

- ☐ A CO alarm on every level of the home.
- ☐ One just outside each sleeping area, to wake you.
- ☐ Battery-backup models, so they work when the power's out.
- ☐ Tested regularly and replaced on the maker's schedule.

★ I'll help you place and test them

On a visit I can help you put CO alarms where they belong and show you how to test them, so they're truly standing guard. It's one of the most worthwhile things I do.

Know the symptoms — and what to do

Catching it early, and acting fast, is everything.

The early signs of carbon-monoxide poisoning are easy to mistake for other things: a headache, dizziness, weakness, an upset stomach, confusion, or feeling unusually sleepy. If several people — or pets — feel that way at once, or it eases when you go outside, treat it as CO. The response is always the same: get everyone into fresh air first, then call 911, and do not go back inside until responders say it's safe.

- Symptoms: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, confusion, sleepiness.
- A clue: several people or pets feeling ill at once, or feeling better outdoors.
- Get everyone outside to fresh air immediately — that comes first.
- Then call 911, and don't re-enter until it's declared safe.

! Fresh air first, then call 911

For any suspected carbon monoxide, getting to fresh air comes before everything else — then call 911. Never go back in to investigate.

The indoor-safe alternative: a battery power station

Here's the reassuring part — there's a backup with none of this danger.

A battery power station is a big rechargeable battery in a box, with normal outlets on the front. Because it burns no fuel, it makes no exhaust and no carbon monoxide at all. That means it's perfectly safe to use indoors — right on the nightstand next to a CPAP, or beside a chair next to an oxygen concentrator. For a medical household, this is exactly why the battery, not the generator, is the star of the plan. Our battery-station guide goes deeper.

✓ Why a battery is the indoor-safe choice

A battery power station makes no fumes and no carbon monoxide, so unlike a fuel generator it is safe to run indoors — right on the nightstand next to a CPAP, or beside a chair next to a concentrator. It is also quiet enough to sleep next to and gives clean, steady power that sensitive equipment is happy with. For any equipment that has to run beside the bed, the battery station is the answer precisely because it can be indoors safely — while the generator stays outside doing the heavy recharging.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The CO rule is the same everywhere — but where you live shapes how generators fit your plan.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or a close-in suburb, homes and neighbors are close together, so generator placement takes extra care and a battery station is often the friendlier fit.

- With neighbors nearby, a generator's exhaust must be kept away from their windows too.
- Tight lots make a true 20-foot, away-from-openings spot harder to find.
- A quiet, fume-free battery station avoids both problems — and won't disturb anyone.
- Shorter outages mean a battery station alone often carries you through.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, outages run longer and there's room to place a generator well away from the house — so a generator to recharge the battery earns its keep, always outdoors.

- There's usually space to site a generator safely, 20-plus feet out, exhaust pointed away.
- Longer outages make a generator valuable — for recharging the station, not running indoors.
- Store fuel safely and keep CO alarms fresh, since you may run a generator more.
- Even with room to spare, never bring it into the barn or garage to run it.

★ Let's set up the safe combination

Whether it's a battery station alone or a station plus a safely-placed generator, I'll help you set it up right for your home. Call (330) 200-8042.

Using a generator the right way

Generators aren't the enemy — misused generators are. Here's the safe role for one.

In a long outage, the smartest job for a generator in a medical household is to recharge your battery power station, outdoors, once or twice a day. That way the quiet, fume-free battery does the bedside work, and the generator — kept safely outside — refills it. You get the best of both: indoor-safe equipment power, plus the endurance a generator adds. Any connection to your home's wiring is a licensed electrician's job, and I'll line that up for you.

- Let the battery station run your equipment indoors.
- Use the generator outdoors to recharge the station, not to run devices inside.
- Turn it off, let it cool, and refuel outdoors — never near the house.
- Leave any wiring hookup to a licensed electrician; I'll coordinate it.

★ I set up the safe hookup, not the gas work

I help you choose and place equipment and coordinate the licensed electrician for any panel work. I don't do the electrical or gas work myself — I make sure the right pro does.

When to call 911

For carbon monoxide and for health, the instinct is the same: don't wait.

If a CO alarm sounds, or anyone feels the symptoms — headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, sleepiness — get everyone outside to fresh air and call 911. And, as with every guide in this batch, if someone is having trouble breathing, has chest pain, seems confused, or has bluish lips or skin, call 911 right away. Fresh air and a phone call are always the right first moves.

! Never second-guess a CO alarm

If the alarm sounds, treat it as real every time. Get out to fresh air, call 911, and let the responders tell you when it's safe to return.

Test your alarms and practice the plan

Safety gear only helps if it's working and everyone knows what to do.

On a calm day, test every CO alarm the way the maker recommends, and make sure everyone in the house knows what the alarm means and where to go. If you have a generator, practice placing it in its safe outdoor spot so it's second nature. A few minutes now means no fumbling later. Our testing guide covers the whole plan.

★ Let's test it together

I'm glad to come out, test your CO alarms, and walk through the safe setup with you and your family. Call or text (330) 200-8042 to set up a visit.

What I help with — and what I don't

Being clear about this line is part of doing right by you.

Bill helps with	The right pro's job
Choosing an indoor-safe battery station	Panel wiring (electrician)
Placing a generator safely outdoors	Gas connections (gas pro)
Placing and testing CO alarms	Your health (doctor / 911)
Coordinating the licensed electrician	How much backup you need (supplier)

★ **A boundary I keep**

I set up the safe equipment and coordinate the licensed pros. I never present myself as doing the electrical or gas work — that's always a qualified professional's job.

The mistakes that cause harm

Every one of these has hurt someone — and every one is avoidable.

- Running a generator in a garage 'just for a bit,' with the door open.
- Putting it on a porch or right beside the house, near a window.
- Trusting a fan or an open door to clear the exhaust.
- Having no working CO alarms, or dead batteries in the ones you have.
- Ignoring early symptoms because 'it's probably nothing.'

! If one of these sounds familiar, fix it today

This is the one page in the batch where I'll ask you not to wait. If any of these is true in your home, please put it right now.

A safety checklist

Work through it soon — this is the checklist I most hope you'll finish.

- ☐ I will only ever run a generator outdoors, 20-plus feet from the house.
- ☐ I know an open door and a fan do not make a garage safe.
- ☐ I have battery-backup CO alarms on every level and outside the bedrooms.
- ☐ I've tested my CO alarms and know they work.
- ☐ I have an indoor-safe battery power station for equipment beside the bed.
- ☐ My family knows the CO symptoms and what to do.
- ☐ Any generator's exhaust points away from all windows and vents.
- ☐ We know to get to fresh air first, then call 911.

★ This is the checklist that matters most

Of everything in this batch, I hope you'll finish this one first. Every box is a real layer of protection for the people you love.

Questions worth asking

A few good questions make your safety setup solid.

Q: Does a newer generator with a CO shutoff change the rule?

No. Some newer units have an automatic shutoff that stops the engine on dangerous CO — look for the safety standard PGMA G300 or UL 2201. It's a helpful backstop, never a reason to run closer or indoors.

Q: Where should CO alarms go?

On every level of the home and just outside each sleeping area, battery-backup so they work in an outage. Test them regularly.

Q: What should I ask an electrician?

How any generator would connect to the house safely, whether a transfer switch or interlock is right, and that all of it meets local code.

Q: Can Bill do the electrical hookup?

No — I coordinate a licensed electrician for that, and I set up the indoor-safe battery station and place the generator and alarms safely.

✓ A CO shutoff is a backstop, not a license

If your generator has an automatic CO shutoff, that's a good thing — but keep following every rule here anyway. It's a safety net, not a change to the rules.

Common Questions

The questions folks ask me most about generator safety, answered plainly.

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

No — never. An open door and a fan do not make a garage safe. Carbon monoxide builds up and seeps into the house. Outdoors only, at least 20 feet away.

Q: Is a propane generator safer indoors than a gas one?

It makes less carbon monoxide than gasoline, but it still makes CO. The outdoor-only rule applies to every fuel-burning generator, propane included.

Q: What backup is actually safe indoors?

A battery power station — it burns no fuel, makes no fumes, and is safe right beside the bed. That's why it's the heart of a medical backup plan.

Q: How far from the house is far enough?

The safety agencies say at least 20 feet, with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent — yours and the neighbor's. Farther is always better.

★ Never hesitate to ask about safety

There is no silly question when it comes to carbon monoxide. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you get every bit of it right.

Bringing it all together

One rule protects your family: generators outdoors only, battery stations safe indoors.

A fuel-burning generator makes carbon monoxide — invisible, odorless, deadly — so it runs outdoors only, at least 20 feet from the house, exhaust pointed away, never in a garage or basement. Working, battery-backup CO alarms stand guard. And a battery power station, which makes no fumes, safely runs your equipment indoors, with the generator kept outside to recharge it. Get this right, and everything else in your plan rests on solid ground.

This is the safety foundation for the whole batch — especially the battery-station, recharging, and car-power guides. Take them one at a time.

★ Let's build it on a safe footing

There's no need to sort this out alone. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, and we'll make sure your backup is safe from the ground up.

Your next small step

Small, doable steps in a gentle order — but please don't put off the alarms.

- Today: check that you have working CO alarms; if not, that's the first buy.
- This week: decide the safe outdoor spot for any generator, 20-plus feet out.
- This week: make sure your family knows the CO symptoms and what to do.
- This month: set up an indoor-safe battery station for bedside equipment.
- Before storm season: test the alarms and practice the safe setup.

✓ The alarms come first

If you do just one thing from this guide, make sure you have working CO alarms. Everything else can follow, but that one shouldn't wait.

A note on newer generators with CO shutoff

A helpful feature worth knowing about — and its limits.

Many newer generators include an automatic carbon-monoxide shutoff: a sensor that stops the engine if it detects dangerous CO nearby. You may see this described with the safety standard PGMA G300 or UL 2201; different makers give the feature different names. It's a genuinely good safety net, and worth having if you're choosing a generator. But please hear this clearly: it is a backstop for mistakes, not permission to run closer or in a sheltered spot. Every rule in this guide still applies, shutoff or not.

! A good feature, but not a change to the rules

Treat a CO shutoff as an extra layer of protection on top of doing everything right — never as a reason to relax the outdoor-only, 20-feet, exhaust-away rules.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made keeping your backup power safe from carbon monoxide feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other important home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. I'll help you choose and set up a battery power station, get the equipment your family depends on connected safely, and test the whole plan before you ever need it. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I help with the power side only — your settings, your prescription, and when to seek care always stay with your doctor and your equipment supplier — and for any licensed electrical work, I'll line you up with a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

The Rule That Saves Lives

Generators outdoors, battery stations indoors



An open door and a fan do NOT make an enclosed space safe.

Where Can It Go?

Only one answer is safe for a running generator

	Place	Safe to run?
Attached garage	No -- never	
Basement / shed	No -- never	
Porch / by a window	No -- too close	
20+ ft outdoors	Yes -- exhaust away	

Battery power stations, by contrast, are safe indoors.

Generator vs. Battery Station

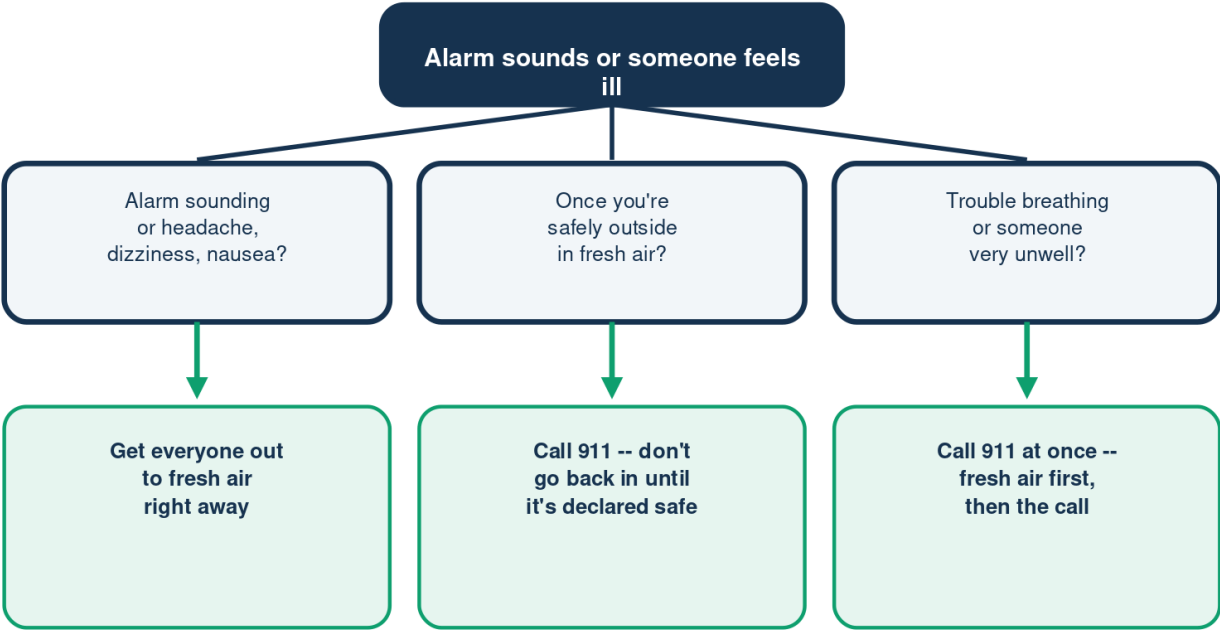
Why the battery sits beside the bed

	Gas generator	Battery station
Exhaust / fumes	Deadly CO	None
Safe indoors?	No -- outdoors	Yes, by the bed
Noise	Loud	Quiet
Best role	Recharge, outside	Run equipment

Run a generator outdoors only, well away from the house.

If You Suspect Carbon Monoxide

A calm, clear plan for a frightening moment



This guide isn't medical advice -- for any health emergency, call 911 without waiting.

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



Need a Real Person?

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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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