



An Extended Guide · No. 1728

Sizing Backup Power for Medical Devices

Read the label, ask the
hours, add a cushion

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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. How many hours of backup you need is a medical question — your supplier and doctor set that number, and this guide just helps you match the power to it.

Let's figure out how much power you need

One of the most common questions I hear is 'how big a battery do we need?' It's a good question, and the answer is simpler than it sounds — as long as we don't guess, and we let your supplier set the target.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. Sizing backup power sounds technical, but it comes down to three plain things: what your device needs, how long it has to run, and a little room to spare. You don't need to be a numbers person — you just need to read a label and ask your supplier one important question.

I'll never invent a number for your equipment, and I'll never tell you how many hours of backup is enough — that's your supplier's and doctor's call. What I can do is help you read the labels and turn their answer into the right size of battery power station.

★ You bring the label, I'll do the arithmetic

Snap a photo of your device labels and we'll size it together. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — there's no charge to talk it through.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you'll size your backup right — without guessing.

- ❑ Read the label on each device; copy the volts, watts, or amps exactly as printed.
- ❑ Ask your supplier how many hours each device must run in an outage — that number drives everything.
- ❑ Add up what would be running at the same time.
- ❑ Choose a battery power station with comfortable room to spare, not just barely enough.
- ❑ An oxygen concentrator draws far more than a CPAP or nebulizer — plan for it carefully.
- ❑ Make sure you can recharge the station, so a long outage doesn't drain you dry.
- ❑ Never guess a wattage or a runtime — let the label and your supplier give the numbers.
- ❑ Test the real runtime on a calm day, so you know what you actually have.

✓ One idea to hold onto

Sizing isn't about buying the biggest battery — it's about matching your real needs, with a sensible cushion, so you're never caught short.

Why getting the size right matters

Too small, and the battery quits early. Comfortably sized, and you rest easy.

A backup that's too small is worse than it sounds: it can run out in the middle of the night, just when you're relying on it. One that's far bigger than you need costs more and is heavier to move around than it has to be. The sweet spot is enough to cover the hours your supplier recommends, plus a comfortable cushion — and finding that spot is what this guide is for.

The whole thing rests on real numbers, not hunches. That's why we start at the label and the supplier, and why I'll never let you buy on a guess.

! A battery buys time — size it, don't gamble on it

Sizing carefully is how a battery does its job calmly. But no battery is a substitute for care: if health is ever at risk, call 911, whatever the charge level says.

Start at the label — and copy, don't guess

Every device has a small label that tells us what it needs. That label is the truth; nothing else is.

Look on the back or bottom of each device, or on its power brick, for a small printed label. It usually lists volts, and either watts or amps. Those are the numbers that matter for sizing. You don't have to understand them — just copy them down exactly, or better yet, snap a clear photo. Then your supplier or I can read precisely what your device needs, with nothing left to guesswork.

- Find the label on the device, its power brick, or in the manual.
- Photograph it clearly, close enough to read every number.
- Copy volts, watts, and amps exactly as printed — don't round or estimate.
- Do this for every device that has to run on backup power.

✓ A photo beats a memory

The easiest way to capture the numbers is a phone photo of each label. Then there's no guessing, no squinting, and no writing down the wrong digit.

Watts and watt-hours, in plain English

Two words get mixed up all the time, so let's make them simple.

Think of a device's watts as how fast it drinks — a steady sip or a big gulp. Think of a battery's watt-hours as the size of the glass — how much it holds in total. A device that sips slowly can run a long time on the same glass; a device that gulps empties it faster. That's really all there is to it. To know how long a battery will run your device, we match how fast it drinks against how big the glass is — and your supplier helps confirm the hours.

- Watts (on the device label) — how fast the device uses power.
- Watt-hours (on the battery) — how much power the battery holds.
- A slow sipper runs far longer than a big gulper on the same battery.
- We don't guess either number — we read them off the labels.

★ I'll do this part with you

You don't have to do this math. Bring me the labels and I'll match your devices to a battery size that covers the hours your supplier recommends, with room to spare.

The key question: how many hours?

This is the one number only your supplier and doctor can give — and it sets the size of everything.

Before we can size a battery, we have to know how long your device actually needs to run when the power's out. A CPAP used only at night is a very different target from an oxygen concentrator that runs around the clock. Ask your supplier how many hours of backup they'd want you to plan for. That answer, more than anything else, decides how big your battery needs to be.

- Ask your supplier: how many hours a day must this device run?
- Ask: how many hours of backup do you recommend I plan for?
- Ask: does any of that change during an outage, or stay the same?
- Write their answers down — they are the foundation of your sizing.

✓ **Their number, not mine**

I'll happily size a battery to hit whatever hours your supplier recommends. But I won't ever tell you what that number should be — that's theirs to decide, for your health.

Add up what runs at the same time

A battery has to carry everything you'd run together, not just one device at a time.

If your CPAP and a medication fridge and a phone charger might all be running off the same battery at once, the battery has to handle them together. So we make a short list of what would be plugged in at the same time, and size for that whole group — not just the biggest single item. Some devices also need a brief extra jolt of power to start up, which is worth noting for anything with a motor or compressor.

- List every device that might run on the battery at the same moment.
- Note anything with a motor or compressor, which can need a starting jolt.
- Size for the whole group running together, with the biggest startup in mind.
- If some devices can take turns instead, that eases the load — ask what's safe.

✓ Sometimes taking turns helps

Not everything has to run at once. If it's safe to charge the phone after the fridge cycles off, a smaller battery can stretch further — but check with your supplier on anything medical.

Some devices need much more power than others

It helps to know which of your devices is the thirsty one.

As a general rule, a CPAP or a nebulizer sips power fairly gently, while an oxygen concentrator draws a good deal more and often runs for many more hours. That doesn't make a concentrator a problem — it just means it deserves careful planning, and usually a larger battery or extra layers of backup. Our oxygen-concentrator guide goes deeper on this, and your supplier can tell you exactly what yours needs.

- CPAP and nebulizer: generally lighter, gentler power users.
- Oxygen concentrator: generally a much bigger draw, often for far longer.
- The thirsty device usually decides how big your battery has to be.
- For a heavy, all-day device, extra layers — like oxygen backup tanks — matter more.

★ We plan around the thirsty one

Once we know which of your devices drinks the most, we size the battery to keep it happy — and make sure the gentler devices are easy to cover too.

Always leave yourself some headroom

A battery run right to its limit is a battery with no margin for a bad night.

Just as you wouldn't plan a trip on exactly enough gas to reach the station, you shouldn't size a battery to run out at the very moment power is due back. Batteries deliver a little less as they age and in the cold, outages run longer than forecast, and you may want to plug in one more thing. A comfortable cushion turns a nervous night into a calm one.

- Aim for more capacity than the bare minimum your hours require.
- Remember batteries give a bit less as they age and when it's cold.
- Leave room for a phone, a light, or a device you didn't plan on.
- A cushion is cheaper than running out — but you don't need to overbuy, either.

✓ Comfortable, not enormous

The goal is a sensible cushion, not the biggest battery in the store. I'll help you find the size that's roomy without being a burden to lift or afford.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Where you live changes how many hours of backup you should size for — because it changes how long outages tend to last.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or a close-in suburb, outages usually run shorter and help is near, so your supplier may set a shorter hours target.

- Shorter typical outages can mean a smaller, lighter battery still covers the gap.
- A supplier or pharmacy close by makes a battery swap or tank exchange easier.
- You can lean a little more on relocating quickly if a battery does run low.
- Still size with a cushion — shorter usually doesn't mean never longer.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, outages often run for days and help is farther off, so your supplier will likely want you sized for more hours — and a private well means no water, adding to what you must plan around.

- Plan for more hours of runtime, which usually means a larger battery or more of them.
- A way to recharge the battery — a generator run safely outdoors — earns its keep here.
- Keep extra layers, like oxygen backup tanks, since a supply run is a long trip.
- Factor the well pump and stored water into your overall power thinking.

★ Let's size it for your home and your hours

Tell me your devices, your supplier's recommended hours, and how far you are from help, and I'll size a battery that fits. Call (330) 200-8042.

Bring the numbers to your supplier and to me

Once you've gathered the labels and the hours, the rest is easy — and you don't do it alone.

With clear photos of your device labels and your supplier's recommended hours in hand, you have everything needed to size a battery properly. Your supplier confirms the medical side — how long, how essential. I take the labels and the hours and translate them into a specific battery power station size to look for, with your cushion built in. Between us, there's no guessing left.

- Give your supplier the device list and ask them to confirm the hours.
- Give me the label photos and their hours, and I'll suggest a battery size.
- We'll double-check it covers everything running together, with headroom.
- You end up with a clear target — not a shrug and a hope.

★ This is exactly what I'm here for

Reading labels and matching them to the right battery is bread-and-butter work for me. Bring me what you've gathered and I'll make it make sense.

Sizing includes how you'll refill it

A battery is only as good as your ability to charge it again in a long outage.

For a short outage, a well-sized battery is the whole answer. For a long one, the question becomes how you refill it — because even a big battery empties eventually. That's why sizing and recharging go together: a generator run safely outdoors, or in some cases solar, can top the battery back up so it carries you day after day. Our guide on recharging your power station in a long outage covers the ways to do it.

✓ Think in days, not just hours, for rural homes

If you're somewhere outages last for days, don't just size for one night — plan how you'll recharge, so the battery keeps coming back.

No amount of sizing replaces knowing when to call 911

The math is here to bring calm — not to keep you home when you shouldn't be.

If equipment fails and your battery is running low, or if someone is having trouble breathing, has chest pain, seems confused, or has bluish lips or skin — call 911. A carefully sized battery is meant to carry you calmly through an ordinary outage, never to make you wait out something serious.

! Size for comfort, act on health

The right-sized battery gives you breathing room in an outage. If health is slipping, that room is exactly what you use to get help — call 911 or head for a hospital or shelter with power.

Measure the real runtime — don't assume it

The only way to truly know how long your battery lasts is to watch it do the job.

Estimates get you close; a real test tells you the truth. On a calm day, run your device from the fully charged battery and see how long it actually goes, or let your supplier and I help you check it safely. Real life — the cold, an aging battery, an extra device — always has a say. Knowing your real runtime lets you plan with confidence. Our testing guide walks through it.

★ Let's measure it together

I'm glad to help you run a safe, real-world test of how long your battery carries your equipment — so the number you plan on is a fact, not a hope. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

What I help with — and what I don't

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

Bill helps with	Always your supplier or doctor's call
Reading device labels	How many hours you need
Matching them to a battery size	How essential a device is
Checking headroom and startup	Your prescribed settings
Testing the real runtime with you	When to seek emergency care

★ **A boundary I keep**

I do the arithmetic and the shopping guidance. The hours, the settings, and the medical judgment always stay with your supplier and doctor — and I'll say so every time.

A few gentle reminders

Not judgments — just the sizing slip-ups I see most often.

- Buying a battery on a guess, without ever reading the device labels.
- Sizing for one device when several would run at the same time.
- Forgetting the starting jolt that motors and compressors need.
- Sizing to the bare minimum, with no cushion for cold or an aging battery.
- Planning a big battery but no way to recharge it in a days-long outage.

! If one of these sounds familiar, that's all right

Catching a sizing gap now is far better than discovering it at 3 a.m. Fix one thing this week and your plan is stronger for it.

A sizing checklist

Work through it at your own pace — each step makes the next one easier.

- ☐ I've photographed the label on every device that needs backup power.
- ☐ I've asked my supplier how many hours of backup to plan for.
- ☐ I've listed what would run at the same time.
- ☐ I know which of my devices draws the most power.
- ☐ I've chosen a battery with comfortable headroom, not the bare minimum.
- ☐ I have a way to recharge the battery in a long outage.
- ☐ I've tested the real runtime on a calm day.
- ☐ I know the signs that mean call 911.

★ Even a few boxes checked is real progress

You don't have to finish today. Every step you take makes your backup more trustworthy when it counts.

Questions worth asking the pros in your life

The sizing questions that belong with your supplier — here's how to ask them well.

Q: What should I ask my equipment supplier?

How many hours each device must run, how many hours of backup they recommend, whether your settings change on backup, and whether the device has an approved battery or car adapter.

Q: What should I have ready when I ask?

Clear photos of each device's label, and a list of which devices would run at the same time in an outage.

Q: What can Bill work out for me?

From the labels and your supplier's hours, a specific battery size to look for — with headroom, startup, and recharging all accounted for.

Q: What should I not try to figure out alone?

How many hours of backup is enough, and anything about your settings or care — those are always your supplier's and doctor's call.

✓ I'll help you prepare the questions

Not sure how to ask? Call me first and we'll write down exactly what to ask your supplier, so you come away with the numbers you need.

Common Questions

The sizing questions families ask me most, answered plainly.

Q: How big a battery do I need?

It depends on your devices' labels and how many hours your supplier recommends. Bring me both and I'll size it — I won't throw out a number without them.

Q: Why can't you just tell me a wattage for my CPAP?

Because the honest number is on your device's own label, and it varies by model. I read it off the label rather than guess, so your sizing is right.

Q: Does an oxygen concentrator really need a much bigger battery?

Generally yes — it draws considerably more than a CPAP and often runs far longer, so it usually calls for more capacity and extra backup layers. Your supplier can confirm.

Q: How much extra should I add for headroom?

Enough for a comfortable cushion against cold, age, and an extra device — roomy without being a burden. I'll help you find that balance for your equipment.

★ However far along you are, I'm glad to help

Whether you're starting from a blank page or double-checking a battery you own, call or text me at (330) 200-8042. We'll size it right, one calm step at a time.

Bringing it all together

Sizing is just four calm steps: read the label, ask the hours, add up what runs together, and add a cushion.

The label tells us what each device needs. Your supplier tells us how many hours to plan for. We add up what runs at the same time, remember the thirsty devices and the startup jolts, and choose a battery with comfortable headroom — plus a way to recharge it for a long outage. Test the real runtime, and you know exactly what you have.

This ties in with the rest of the batch — the battery-station, oxygen-concentrator, and recharging guides all lean on good sizing. Take them one at a time.

★ Let's size yours together

There's no need to work this out alone. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, bring the labels, and we'll land on the right size with room to spare.

Your next small step

Small, doable steps in a gentle order — no need to do them all at once.

- Today: photograph the label on each device that needs backup power.
- This week: ask your supplier how many hours of backup to plan for.
- This week: list what would run at the same time in an outage.
- This month: bring the labels and hours to me and choose a battery size.
- Before storm season: test the real runtime on a calm day.

✓ One step at a time is plenty

Even photographing your labels today moves you from guessing to knowing. The rest follows easily from there.

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 sizing backup power for your medical equipment 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.

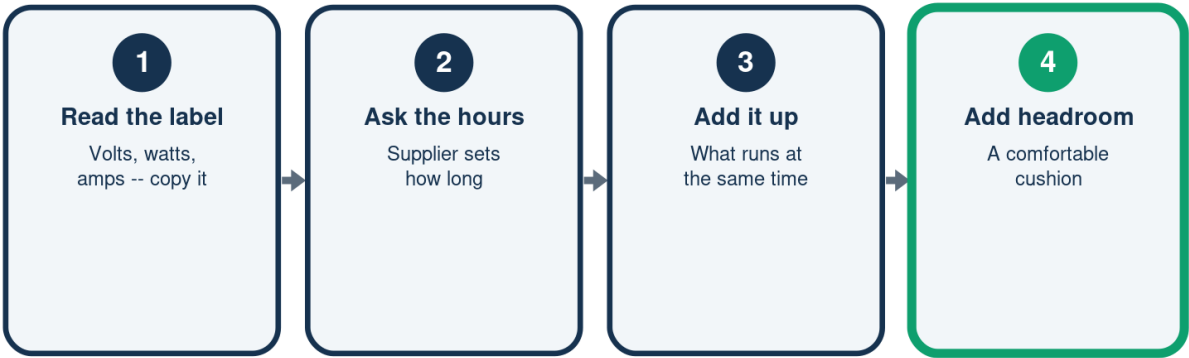
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. I'll help you choose and set up a battery power station, get the equipment your family depends on connected safely, and test the whole plan before you ever 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

Sizing Your Backup in Four Steps

No guessing -- just labels, hours, and a cushion



The label and your supplier give every number.

Watts vs. Watt-Hours, Made Simple

How fast it drinks vs. how big the glass is

	Watts	Watt-hours
What it means	How fast used	How much stored
Found on	Device label	The battery
Bigger number	Drinks faster	Lasts longer
You should	Read it	Match it

A slow sipper runs far longer on the same battery.

Which Device Is the Thirsty One?

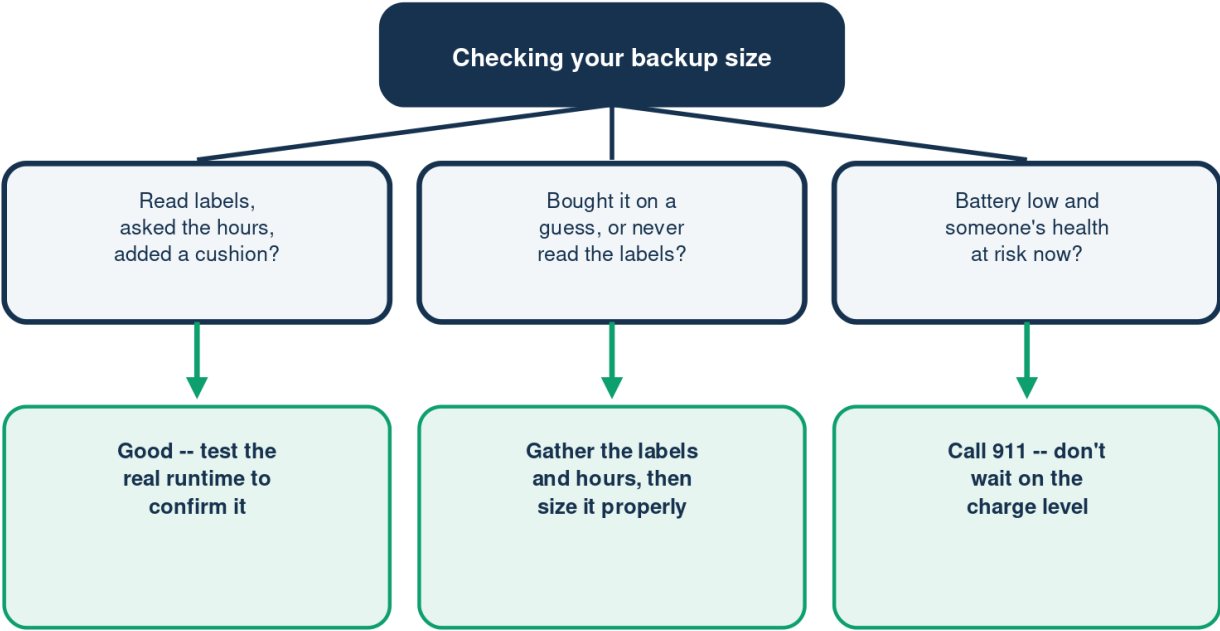
A general guide -- your label has the real numbers

	Gentler draw	Bigger draw
Typical devices	CPAP, nebulizer	Oxygen concentrator
Hours it runs	Often just nights	Often all day
Battery needed	Smaller can do	Usually larger
Extra layers	Helpful	More important

The thirsty device usually decides the battery size.

Is Your Battery Big Enough?

A calm gut-check on your sizing



This guide isn't medical advice -- your supplier and doctor set how many hours of backup you need.

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



Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

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— Bill

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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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