



An Extended Guide · No. 1738

Talking With Your Power Company

Reporting, notices,
and honest expectations

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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. Your power company is a helpful partner, but being on their list or reporting an outage never guarantees the lights stay on — so your own backups and, if health is at risk, calling 911 always come first.

Your power company is a partner — let's talk to them

The electric utility isn't just a bill in the mail. For a medical household, they're a partner worth talking to — one who can flag your home, warn you of planned outages, and know you're waiting when the power goes out.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. A lot of folks never speak to their power company except to pay the bill. But a few simple conversations — getting on their radar, learning how to report an outage fast, understanding what they can and can't promise — make you a known, well-served customer instead of an anonymous account number.

This guide is about that relationship. Our separate guide on registering with your utility's medical list covers the sign-up itself; this one covers talking to them well, all year round.

★ I'll help you make the calls

If picking up the phone to a utility feels like a hassle, I'm glad to sit with you and help. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, your utility will know you and serve you better.

- ❑ Get on your utility's medical or priority list first — our separate guide covers how.
- ❑ Learn how to report an outage fast: by phone, app, or website.
- ❑ Have your account number and address ready when you call.
- ❑ Ask about restoration priority — what it means, and what it doesn't.
- ❑ Sign up for planned-outage notices, so you're never caught off guard.
- ❑ Keep your contact details current with them.
- ❑ Understand they cannot promise the power will always stay on — so keep your backups.
- ❑ For any health emergency, call 911 — never wait on the utility.

✓ One idea to hold onto

A utility that knows you're a medical household, with current details on file, is far more likely to give you notice and attention — but your own backups are still what you rely on.

Why it pays to talk to your utility

A few conversations turn a faceless account into a household they know.

Utilities serve thousands of homes, and to them your house is mostly an account number — unless you tell them otherwise. When you register as a medical household, report outages promptly, and keep your details current, you become a home they can flag, notify, and account for. None of it guarantees uninterrupted power, but it tilts things in your favor: advance notice of planned work, a marker for restoration crews, and a record that someone here depends on electricity.

Think of it as a relationship you invest in a little, on calm days, so it's already there when a storm rolls in.

★ A little effort now, real value later

The calls take a few minutes and cost nothing. I'm glad to help you make them, so your utility knows your household before you ever need them to.

First, get on the medical list

The foundation of the whole relationship is being registered.

Before anything else, make sure you're on your utility's medical or priority list — sometimes called a critical-care or life-support registry. It's usually a short form, sometimes with your doctor's confirmation, and it flags your home as one where someone depends on powered equipment. Our guide on registering with your utility's medical list walks through it step by step, so this guide won't repeat all the detail — just know it's step one.

- Call customer service and ask about their medical or priority program.
- Complete their form — often with your doctor's confirmation.
- Ask what being on the list does and doesn't provide.
- See our utility-list guide for the full walk-through.

✓ Registration is the door-opener

Being on the list is what makes the rest of this relationship work — the notices, the flag for crews, the record that you're a medical household. Start there.

Reporting an outage quickly

The sooner you report, the sooner you're counted — so know how before you need to.

When the power goes out, reporting it promptly helps the utility know the scope of the problem and helps you get counted. Learn your utility's ways to report — a phone number, an app, or a website — and pick the one easiest for you. Have your account number and address handy, since that's usually what they ask for. Reporting also often lets you hear estimated restoration times as they're updated.

- Learn the outage-reporting phone number, app, or website in advance.
- Keep your account number and service address where you can grab them.
- Report promptly when the power goes out — don't assume they already know.
- Ask for or check the estimated restoration time.

★ Let's set up the easy way for you

Whether it's a saved phone number, a bookmark, or an app on your phone, I'll help you set up the simplest way to report an outage, so it's one easy step when you need it.

Asking about restoration priority

It's worth understanding — both what it can offer and what it can't.

Many utilities try to prioritize restoring power to medical households and critical facilities, and being on their list is what makes that possible. It's genuinely worth asking how their restoration process works and whether your medical status is factored in. But it's just as important to hear the honest limit: after a major storm, crews restore power in the way that safely brings the most people back fastest, and no utility can promise your home will be first. Priority helps; it doesn't guarantee.

- Ask whether your medical status is considered in restoration.
- Ask, in general terms, how they decide the order of repairs.
- Understand priority is a factor, not a promise your home comes first.
- Let that honest limit be the reason you keep strong backups.

! Priority is a help, not a guarantee

Even the best restoration priority can't promise the power. That's precisely why your battery backups, layers, and relocation plan matter — they're what you truly rely on.

Signing up for planned-outage notices

Not every outage is a surprise — and the planned ones you can prepare for.

Utilities sometimes shut power off on purpose — for maintenance, for repairs, or in some regions to reduce wildfire risk in dry, windy weather. The good news is these are usually announced in advance, and many utilities will notify you directly if you sign up. For a medical household, that advance warning is gold: it lets you charge everything, position your backups, and be fully ready. Ask how to receive these notices by phone, text, or email.

- Ask your utility how to sign up for planned-outage notifications.
- Choose how you'd like to be notified — call, text, or email.
- When a planned outage is announced, treat it like storm prep and charge up.
- Keep your contact details current so the notices actually reach you.

✓ Advance notice is a gift

A known outage is a manageable one. Signing up for notices means you're never caught off guard by a planned shutoff.

While you wait for the power to return

Your backups carry you until the crews do their work — one safety rule included.

Even a responsive utility takes time to restore power after a big storm, so your own backups are what bridge the gap. Run your equipment from the battery power station indoors, keep phones charged, and lean on your layers. If your plan includes a generator to recharge the battery over a long wait, remember the one rule that never bends.

! 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. While you wait for restoration, never run a generator indoors, in a garage, or on a porch to bridge the outage. It runs outdoors only, at least 20 feet from the house, exhaust pointed away. The battery power station it recharges is what safely runs your equipment indoors.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Who your power company is, and how they operate, can differ quite a bit between town and country.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or a close-in suburb, you're usually served by a larger utility with apps, phone systems, and crews that often reach dense areas sooner.

- A larger utility often has an app or website for quick outage reporting.
- Dense areas are frequently restored earlier after a widespread outage.
- Notification sign-ups are usually well established — take advantage of them.
- Still keep backups; even quick restoration isn't instant.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, you may be served by a rural electric cooperative, and restoration can take longer because lines cover more ground with fewer customers per mile.

- Learn your co-op's specific outage line and how they prefer reports.
- Expect longer restoration times and plan your backups accordingly.
- Ask your co-op directly about medical registration and notices — smaller often means more personal.
- Remember the well pump is off too, so factor water into the wait.

★ Let's learn how your utility works

Tell me who provides your power, and I'll help you learn their reporting, notices, and medical program — whether it's a big company or a local co-op. Call (330) 200-8042.

Keep your details current with them

A flag on your account only helps if the contact information behind it still works.

Being registered does you little good if the phone number on file is an old landline you've dropped, or the email goes to an address you never check. Every so often, confirm that your utility has your current phone, email, and any notes about your medical needs. If you move, change your number, or your situation changes, tell them. A current record is what makes the notices arrive and the priority flag mean something.

- Confirm your phone and email on file are ones you actually use.
- Update them right away if anything changes.
- Re-confirm your medical registration if renewals are required.
- Note a second contact — a caregiver — if they allow it.

★ A quick yearly check keeps it real

Once a year, I can help you confirm your details are current with your utility — a five-minute call that keeps every other benefit working.

What the utility can — and can't — promise

Knowing the honest limits is what keeps your plan realistic.

It's important to hold two truths at once. A utility that knows you're a medical household can offer real help: advance notice, a restoration flag, and a record that you depend on power. But no utility can promise your power will never go out or that your home will always be first back. Storms, equipment failures, and downed lines happen. The wise approach is to use everything the utility offers and still keep your own backups strong, so you're never relying on a promise no one can make.

- They can offer notice, a flag for crews, and a medical record — use it all.
- They cannot guarantee the power stays on or that you're first restored.
- Your backups are what you truly rely on, always.
- For health emergencies, 911 — never the utility — is who you call.

! Use their help, rely on your backups

The utility relationship is a valuable layer, not a safety net for your health. Keep your battery backups and your plan, and call 911 whenever health is at risk.

The utility is for power — 911 is for health

Never let a call to the power company stand in for a call for help.

The outage line is for reporting and updates, not for emergencies. If equipment fails and your backups are running low, or if someone is having trouble breathing, has chest pain, seems confused, or has bluish lips or skin — call 911, not the utility. The power company can't help a person in distress, and time matters. Report the outage when you can, but health comes first, every time.

! Don't wait on the utility when health is at risk

A restoration estimate is never a reason to wait out a health emergency. Call 911, or get to a hospital or shelter with power, and let the utility call come second.

Have your utility information ready

A few details, kept handy, make every call quick and smooth.

When you call your utility, they'll usually ask for your account number and service address, and it saves real time to have them ready rather than digging through paperwork in the dark. Keep a small card with your utility's key details on your plan and in your go-bag, so a helper can make the call too if needed.

- ❑ Your account number, from a recent bill.
- ❑ Your exact service address, as the utility has it.
- ❑ The outage-reporting number, app name, or website.
- ❑ Your medical-list registration reference, if you have one.

★ I'll help you make the card

On a visit I can help you gather these details onto a simple card for your plan and go-bag, so any call to the utility is quick and painless.

What I help with — and what I don't

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

Bill helps with	Someone else's role
Helping you make the utility calls	Their restoration decisions
Setting up outage reporting on your phone	Their medical program terms
Gathering your account details	Your medical needs (doctor)
Keeping your info card current	Emergencies (call 911)

★ **A boundary I keep**

I help you talk to your utility and stay organized. What they promise, and anything medical, isn't mine to decide — I'll point you to them and to your doctor.

A few gentle reminders

Not judgments — just the patterns I see most, so you can step around them.

- Never registering on the medical list, so the utility doesn't know you.
- Letting old contact details sit on file, so notices never arrive.
- Not knowing how to report an outage until the power's already out.
- Treating restoration priority as a guarantee, and skipping backups.
- Calling the utility for a health emergency instead of 911.

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

Spotting a gap is the whole point. Fix one this week — update your details, or save the outage number — and your utility relationship is stronger.

A caring checklist

Work through it at your own pace — the only deadline is the one you set.

- ☐ I'm registered on my utility's medical or priority list.
- ☐ I know how to report an outage — by phone, app, or website.
- ☐ My account number and address are handy for quick calls.
- ☐ I've signed up for planned-outage notifications.
- ☐ My contact details on file are current.
- ☐ I understand priority helps but doesn't guarantee power.
- ☐ I keep my own backups strong regardless.
- ☐ I know to call 911, not the utility, for any health emergency.

★ Even a few boxes checked is real progress

You don't have to do it all today. Every box makes your utility a better partner when the power goes out.

Questions worth asking your utility

A handful of questions make you a well-known, well-served customer.

Q: How do I get on your medical or priority list?

Ask about their program, the form, and whether your doctor's confirmation is needed. Our utility-list guide covers this in full.

Q: How do I report an outage, and what do you need from me?

Ask for the phone number, app, or website, and what details — account number, address — they'll ask for.

Q: Does my medical status affect restoration, and how?

Ask, in general terms, how they prioritize, and hear honestly that priority helps but can't guarantee your home comes first.

Q: How do I get planned-outage notifications?

Ask how to sign up and whether you can be notified by call, text, or email — and make sure your contact details are current.

✓ 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 utility, so one call covers it all.

Common Questions

The questions folks ask me most about dealing with the utility, answered plainly.

Q: Will being on the medical list keep my power on?

No — it flags your home for notice and restoration attention, but no utility can promise the power stays on. That's exactly why you keep your own backups.

Q: Should I report an outage if my neighbors probably did?

Yes — report it anyway. It helps the utility gauge the scope, gets you counted, and often lets you hear a restoration estimate. Don't assume they know.

Q: What's a planned outage, and how do I hear about it?

It's a shutoff the utility schedules on purpose, usually announced in advance. Sign up for their notifications so you get warning and can prepare.

Q: Who do I call if someone's health is at risk during an outage?

911 — always, and first. The utility is for power; 911 is for people. Report the outage afterward, once help is on the way.

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

Whether you're registering for the first time or just want to talk to your utility better, call or text me at (330) 200-8042. We'll make them a real partner in your plan.

Bringing it all together

A good utility relationship is a few simple habits: register, report, sign up for notices, and keep your details current.

Get on the medical list, learn how to report an outage fast, sign up for planned-outage notices, and keep your contact information current. Ask how restoration priority works, and hear the honest limit — priority helps, but no one can promise the power. Use everything the utility offers, keep your own backups strong, and always call 911, not the utility, when health is at risk.

This pairs closely with the utility-list guide and the planning guide. Take them one at a time.

★ Let's make your utility a partner

There's no need to navigate this alone. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, and we'll get you on their radar and set up for good service.

Your next small step

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

- This week: if you're not on the medical list, start there — see our utility-list guide.
- This week: save your utility's outage-reporting number in your phone.
- This month: sign up for planned-outage notifications.
- This month: confirm your contact details on file are current.
- Anytime: make a small card with your account details for your plan.

✓ One step at a time is plenty

Even saving the outage number today makes the next outage easier. The rest follows at your pace.

A note on rural electric co-ops

If a cooperative provides your power, the relationship can be a bit different — often more personal.

Many rural homes get their electricity from a member-owned cooperative rather than a big utility. Co-ops cover a lot of ground with fewer customers, so restoration after a storm can take longer — but they can also be more personal and approachable. It's well worth calling your co-op directly to ask about their medical registration, how they notify members, and how they handle outages. Being known by name matters even more in a smaller organization.

★ I'll help you reach your co-op

If a co-op serves your home, I'm glad to help you contact them and learn their specific programs — they're often friendlier to deal with than folks expect. Call (330) 200-8042.

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 working with your power company as a medical household 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

Talking to Your Utility, Step by Step

A few habits make you a known, well-served home



Being on their radar helps -- but keep your own backups.

What Your Utility Can and Can't Do

Use the help; rely on your backups

	They can	They can't
Notice	Warn of planned work	
Flag your home	For restoration	
Keep power on		No guarantee
Handle emergencies		Call 911, not them

Priority helps, but no utility can promise the power stays on.

Have This Ready When You Call

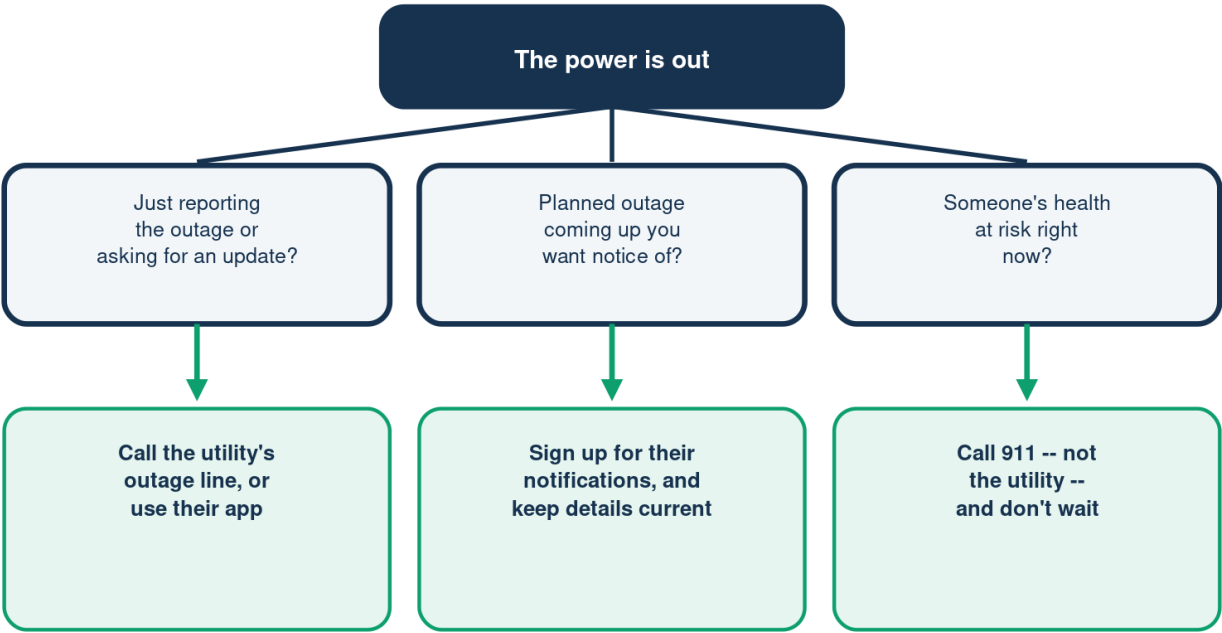
A smooth call saves time and stress

	Detail	Where to find it
Account number	A recent bill	Keep it on a card
Service address	As they have it	On your plan
Outage number	Save it now	In your phone
Medical reference	From registering	With your plan

Keep a small utility card on your plan and in your go-bag.

Who Do I Call?

A calm gut-check during an outage



This guide isn't medical advice -- the utility is for power, 911 is for health.

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.
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BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness, no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

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— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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