



An Extended Guide · No. 1220

Where to Put It, and Running It in Bad Weather

Safe placement, rain,
snow, heat, and neighbors

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! Read this first — carbon monoxide is the real danger

A running generator's exhaust contains carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill in minutes. Never run a generator indoors, in a garage, in a shed, or on a porch, not even with the 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. Put battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on each floor and outside the bedrooms. If an alarm sounds, or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone into fresh air first and ask questions later. Picking the right spot, in every kind of weather, is how that rule above becomes real in your own yard — which is exactly what the rest of this guide walks through.

Let's find the right spot for yours

A generator that's perfectly sized and perfectly maintained can still cause trouble if it's standing in the wrong spot, or caught out in weather it wasn't ready for. This guide is about the ground under it and the sky above it.

I'm Bill, and after the carbon monoxide rule itself, where you physically set the generator down is the next thing I spend the most time talking through with folks. It's not complicated, but it deserves a few minutes of real thought before the first storm, not during it.

We'll cover picking a good spot, keeping it and yourself dry, and handling rain, snow, heat, and even flooding, so nothing catches you off guard mid-outage.

★ Let's walk your yard together

If you'd like a second set of eyes on your spot before you ever need it, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — I'm glad to walk your yard with you and help you pick one that's safe, practical, and easy to reach in bad weather.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, your setup will handle almost anything the weather brings.

- ❑ Pick the spot before you need it — firm, dry, level ground, well away from the house.
- ❑ Point the exhaust away from every window, door, and vent, including the air conditioner's intake and the neighbor's house.
- ❑ A running-rated cover keeps rain off. A sealed-up enclosure traps deadly exhaust — never use one.
- ❑ Keep the generator and your hands dry. Never touch it, or plug anything in, while it or you are wet.
- ❑ Never run it in standing water or a flood-prone spot.
- ❑ In a long outage, plan for security too — a cable and lock, and a spot that's not begging to be noticed.

✓ Pace it off in daylight

Whatever spot you choose, walk it and measure it once in calm daylight, so you're not guessing in the dark during a storm.

Picking the spot — the core checklist

A good spot answers four questions at once: is it far enough away, is it firm and dry, which way does the exhaust point, and can you actually get to it in bad weather?

Distance and exhaust direction are first and foremost a carbon monoxide question, and our guide on carbon monoxide safety covers that rule in full depth — outdoors only, at least 20 feet from the house, exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent. Everything on this page assumes you've already got that part right.

Beyond the CO distance, think about the ground itself and the path to it. A spot right outside the back door might satisfy the distance rule but sit in a low spot that floods, or be a long, awkward walk in the snow. Picture yourself reaching it at night, in the rain, before you commit to it.

- Firm, dry, and level — not grass that turns to mud, not gravel that shifts.
- Exhaust pointed away from windows, doors, vents, and any air conditioner's outdoor intake.
- Away from the neighbor's windows and doors too, not just your own.
- Reachable without a long, awkward, or slippery walk in bad weather.

✓ Consider more than one spot

Wind direction changes. Having a primary spot and a backup in mind — say, one for a north wind and one for a south wind — means you're never stuck choosing between a bad angle and a bad night.

Reading the wind, the intakes, and the neighbors

'Point the exhaust away from the house' is easy to say and easy to get only half right. A couple of specific spots deserve their own thought.

Your air conditioner's intake

Central air conditioners and heat pumps draw outside air in through their outdoor unit. Exhaust drifting into that intake can pull carbon monoxide toward your home's ductwork from far from where the generator sits. Keep the generator well clear of it, and mind which way the exhaust drifts relative to it.

The wind, and the neighbors

Exhaust follows the wind, not a straight line you picked on a calm day. On a breezy afternoon, check which way smoke or a flag is actually blowing rather than assuming 'facing away from the house' on paper is enough. And on a tighter lot especially, your exhaust can drift toward a neighbor's windows and doors just as easily as your own — be as thoughtful about their safety as yours.

✓ When the wind won't cooperate

If the wind keeps shifting exhaust toward a window no matter how you turn the generator, move the whole setup farther away rather than accepting a bad angle. Distance forgives an imperfect direction better than direction forgives too little distance.

The ground underneath it matters

A generator's engine relies on gravity to keep its oil where it belongs. The ground it's sitting on is not a small detail.

Choose a firm, level surface — concrete, pavers, or hard-packed ground. A generator tipped even a little on soft grass or loose gravel can run its oil unevenly, and a machine that vibrates on soft or uneven ground can walk itself toward an edge or a puddle over the course of a long run.

Avoid low spots that collect water after rain, soft lawn that turns to mud, and loose gravel that can shift under the wheels. If your only option is imperfect ground, a rigid mat or a couple of paving stones can make a real difference.

✓ A level check takes ten seconds

Most generators have a simple visual level indicator, or you can eyeball it against a level surface nearby. It's a small habit that protects the engine every single time you set it up.

Covers and canopies — and the one they should never be

Keeping a generator dry in the rain is smart. Boxing it in to do that is one of the most dangerous mistakes in this whole guide.

A generator tent, canopy, or cover made specifically for running use is built to shed rain while leaving real airflow around the engine and exhaust. Look for a cover explicitly rated for use while running, not just storage, and make sure it still leaves the exhaust side open to the air.

What you must never do is build or buy anything that fully encloses the generator while it runs — a snug tarp tucked to the ground, a storage shed, a doghouse-style box, or any structure without genuine open airflow. That traps exhaust and carbon monoxide right around the machine, which defeats the entire outdoor rule our carbon monoxide guide is built around, even though the generator is technically 'outside.'

! If it can't breathe freely, it's not a safe cover

A true running-rated cover is closer to an open-sided tent than a box. If you have to ask whether air can move freely all the way around it, treat the answer as no and open it up.

Cords, connections, and the weather

The generator isn't the only thing exposed to the weather — the cords running from it need the same respect.

Use only outdoor-rated cords, marked on the jacket with letters like SJTW or STW, and inspect them for cracks or damage before every use. A cord rated for indoor use only is not safe to leave out in the rain.

- Keep plug connections up off wet ground — a cord cover or a raised, dry surface works well.
- Use a proper cord cover or connection box in wet weather, not just a plastic bag.
- Don't run cords through standing water or let a connection sit in a puddle.
- Don't pinch cords under doors or windows, where the jacket can wear through.

✓ Fully uncoil every cord

A cord left coiled while carrying a load can build up heat and become a fire risk — stretch it all the way out before you plug anything in, rain or shine.

Running it in the rain

Light rain doesn't have to mean losing power, as long as the generator itself stays properly protected.

Under a running-rated cover, on dry, firm ground, a generator can keep running through an ordinary rain. Check on it periodically rather than leaving it entirely unattended for hours, and keep an eye on the ground underneath for pooling water as the storm continues.

In heavier or wind-driven rain, or if water starts to pool anywhere near the unit or its cords, it's time to power down, let things dry out, and reassess — a soaked generator is a hazard, not an inconvenience to push through.

! Never touch it with wet hands, or without protection

Water and electricity are a dangerous mix. Keep your hands dry when you approach it, and if you must check on it in the rain, treat every switch and outlet with extra caution — more on staying dry yourself a couple pages ahead.

Snow and cold-weather placement

Snow changes the placement conversation in a few specific ways, even though the core rules don't change at all.

Clear a firm patch down to the ground, or set the generator on a rigid platform above the snowpack, rather than letting it sink or tip in loose snow. Keep snow cleared away from the exhaust and the air intake throughout the outage, not just when you first set it up — a storm can bury both while it runs.

Never move it into the garage or another enclosed space 'just to warm it up' — the same outdoor rule holds in the cold as in every other season. For starting, battery care, and running the engine itself in freezing temperatures, our cold-weather guide covers those details; this page is about where it sits.

✓ A simple wind block helps more than shelter does

If wind is cutting into the cold badly, a low windbreak a few feet away — not touching or enclosing the unit — can help more than trying to tuck the generator somewhere sheltered but unsafe.

Flooding — know when to move it

Of every weather risk in this guide, rising water is the one that calls for the most decisive action.

Never run a generator in standing water, and never let one sit somewhere water could reach while it's running. If you're in a flood-prone spot, keep an eye on the forecast and rising water the same way you'd watch a storm coming, and move the generator to higher, dry ground well before water actually gets close.

If water does reach a generator that's been running, power it down using a dry switch or breaker if you can safely reach one, and don't touch the unit, its cords, or standing water anywhere near it until everything is confirmed dry and safe — treat it the same as any other electrical hazard in a flood.

! When water is rising, the generator waits

No amount of backup power is worth wading through or standing near floodwater with an energized generator and cords nearby. If you're genuinely unsure whether it's safe, shut it off, stay clear, and wait it out.

Extreme heat, and a fire risk worth knowing

Heat is easier to overlook than rain or snow, but it brings its own two concerns — how the generator handles it, and what it's sitting on.

A generator works harder to stay cool in high heat, so keep its own vents and air intakes clear, and a little shade — an open-sided structure, not an enclosure — can help, as long as it doesn't block airflow. Give it a bit more room around it than you would in mild weather.

The bigger risk is underneath it. A generator's muffler and exhaust run genuinely hot, and setting one on dry grass, mulch, or fallen leaves during a hot, dry stretch is a real fire risk. Choose bare, firm ground, gravel, or pavement instead, especially during a drought or a burn ban.

! Hot exhaust and dry vegetation don't mix

This is an easy detail to miss because it has nothing to do with electricity at all. Before you place the generator in summer, look down, not just around — what's directly underneath and beside it matters as much as the distance from the house.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Even placement looks a little different depending on your lot — what a tight in-town yard makes hard, open country makes easy, and vice versa.

If you live in town or the suburbs

A smaller lot means fewer places that satisfy the distance rule, tighter sightlines to the neighbors, and less natural cover from wind and weather. Placement here takes more deliberate thought, even though the outage is often shorter.

- Walk your actual property line and measure — on a small lot, the safe spot may be narrower than you'd guess.
- Hardscape (a patio, driveway, or walkway) often makes a better, more level, more weatherproof spot than a patch of lawn.
- Noise and exhaust direction toward a close neighbor deserve real thought, not just toward your own house.
- Security matters even in town — a generator running in a visible front or side yard can attract attention.

If you are out in the country on a well

More open land makes finding a distant, well-drained spot easier, but rural outages often run longer, which means the generator faces more hours of whatever weather shows up — and it may be sitting farther from where you can easily check on it.

- Take advantage of the space to put real distance between the generator and the house, and between it and any barn, coop, or hay that could be a fire risk in heat.
- A longer walk to the spot means planning for a flashlight, boots, and a clear path in snow or mud.
- Outbuildings are tempting shelter in bad weather — treat a pole barn or lean-to exactly like a garage; it's not outdoors.
- Longer, more isolated outages make security — a cable, a lock, a line of sight from the house — worth extra thought.

★ Not sure what your lot allows?

Every yard is a little different. Tell me about yours — tight in-town lot or open country — and I'll help you find a spot that checks every box: safe, dry, reachable, and reasonably quiet for whoever's nearby. Call (330) 200-8042.

Keeping it, and you, dry

A generator and water are never friends, but the danger isn't really about the machine — it's about you touching it.

Never touch the generator, its switches, or its outlets with wet hands, and never operate it while you're standing in water or on soaked ground. If it's gotten rained on more than a running-rated cover should allow, let it dry out and, if you have any doubt about its condition, have it checked before you rely on it again.

Use GFCI-protected outlets, especially in damp conditions — many generators have this built in, and a portable GFCI adapter can add it to ones that don't. It's designed to cut power fast if it senses current going somewhere it shouldn't, which matters most exactly when things are wet.

! Wet and electrical never mix — no exceptions

If your hands, the ground you're standing on, or the generator itself are wet, stop and dry off or wait it out before you touch anything. This is one of the few rules in this guide with absolutely no reasonable exception.

Noise, and being a good neighbor

Placement affects more than safety — it decides whether your generator is a quiet background hum or a source of 2 a.m. phone calls from next door.

Distance helps with noise just as it helps with carbon monoxide, and a hard surface can actually reflect sound toward a house, while grass or a bit of landscaping between the generator and a property line can soften it. Pointing the exhaust and the loudest side of the unit away from bedrooms — yours and the neighbor's — makes a real difference too.

If quiet running matters a lot to you, that's really a buying decision as much as a placement one — our guide on running a generator quietly goes deep on which features and habits cut noise the most. This page is about getting the most out of whichever generator you already have.

✓ A quick word with the neighbors goes a long way

A heads-up that you'll be running a generator, and roughly for how long, turns a noisy nuisance into an understood inconvenience. Most people are far more forgiving when they know what's happening and for how long.

Theft and security during a long outage

A generator running in the yard during a widespread outage is valuable, visible, and — unfortunately — sometimes a target. A little forethought goes a long way.

- **Cable and lock it** to something solid, the same way you'd secure a bike, especially overnight or when you're not right there.
- **Keep it out of plain sight from the street** where you reasonably can, without compromising the safe-distance and exhaust rules.
- **Add a little visibility for yourself** — a motion light or a spot you can see from a window — rather than tucking it somewhere you can't check on it.
- **Mark it** with your name or an engraved number, so it's identifiable if it's ever recovered after being taken.

✓ Don't let security tempt you into an unsafe spot

A hidden, sheltered, or enclosed spot might feel more secure, but never at the cost of the distance and airflow rules earlier in this guide. A locked cable on a properly placed generator beats a perfectly hidden one that's put your family at risk.

When the weather turns severe

Every rule so far assumes ordinary bad weather — rain, snow, heat. Severe weather calls for a different question: should it be running at all right now?

During lightning, very high wind, or a tornado warning, your safety comes first, ahead of keeping the power on. It's reasonable to power the generator down and get everyone — including yourself — to proper shelter, the same as you would without a generator running at all.

Once the immediate danger passes, check the generator and its surroundings before starting it again — fallen branches, standing water, or a wind-shifted position can all change whether your spot is still a safe one.

! The fridge can wait; you can't be replaced

It's tempting to keep a generator running through anything to protect food or comfort, but no outage inconvenience is worth riding out a genuine severe-weather warning next to a running machine outdoors. Shelter first, generator second.

A simple pre-placement walk

Everything on the pages before this one comes together in one practical exercise — walk your own property once, before you ever need to, and settle it in advance.

- ❑ Pick a spot at least 20 feet from the house, firm, dry, and level.
- ❑ Face the exhaust away from your windows, doors, vents, the A/C unit, and the neighbor's house.
- ❑ Check what's underneath — bare ground or pavement, not dry grass, mulch, or leaves.
- ❑ Walk the path to it in your mind during rain, snow, and darkness — is it still manageable?
- ❑ Decide where the cords will run, and keep that path out of doorways and standing water.
- ❑ Note a backup spot for when the wind is blowing from a different direction.

★ I'll help you pick it once, properly

This is one of my favorite parts of a visit — walking the yard together and settling on a spot you won't have to rethink during the next storm. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

Common placement and weather mistakes

A short list of avoidable slip-ups covers most of the placement regret I hear about.

- **Choosing the closest spot** instead of the safest one, to save a few steps with the cord.
- **Building or buying a full enclosure** to keep the rain off, not realizing it traps exhaust.
- **Setting it on dry grass or mulch** in hot weather, without a thought for the hot muffler underneath.
- **Ignoring which way the wind is actually blowing** and trusting a spot that looked fine on a calm day.
- **Ignoring rising water** until the generator is already sitting in it.
- **Never deciding on a spot in advance**, and improvising in the dark during the first real storm.

! Improvising is where mistakes happen

Almost every placement mistake in this guide happens under pressure — in the rain, at night, in a hurry. Deciding your spot calmly, in advance, removes most of that risk before it ever starts.

Questions worth asking yourself

A short checklist to run through before every start, not just the first one.

Q: Is my planned spot still 20 feet from the house in every direction, not just the nearest wall?

Measure it, don't estimate it — pace it off once and remember the number.

Q: What's directly underneath and beside the generator?

Bare ground, gravel, or pavement, not dry grass, mulch, or anything that could catch a spark from a hot muffler.

Q: Which way is the exhaust pointed relative to today's wind, not just the compass?

Check the actual wind — a flag, smoke, or leaves — rather than assuming yesterday's direction still holds.

Q: Is the spot still safe if the weather gets worse before I check on it again?

Picture rising water, shifting wind, or deepening snow, and choose a spot that stays safe even if you can't get back out to it right away.

✓ Ask it every time, not just the first time

A spot that was safe last outage is worth a quick second look this time — ground shifts, trees grow, and neighbors' windows move if anyone's added an addition or a shed.

Common Questions

The placement and weather questions I hear most often, answered plainly.

Q: Can I run my generator on my covered patio if it's raining hard?

Only if 'covered' still means genuinely open on the sides with real airflow — and even then, mind the carbon monoxide distance and direction rules. A fully enclosed patio is not a safe spot.

Q: Is a generator tent the same as a safe cover?

Only if it's specifically rated for use while running, with real airflow around the unit. A tent or tarp that seals up tight around the machine is not safe, no matter how good it is at keeping rain out.

Q: How much distance do I really need from my neighbor's house?

Treat their windows, doors, and vents the same way you'd treat your own — well away, with the exhaust pointed elsewhere. There's no separate, smaller rule for someone else's house.

Q: Does cold weather change where I should put it?

Not the core rules — still outdoors, still well away. It does mean clearing snow around it regularly and never moving it inside to warm up, which our cold-weather guide covers in more depth.

★ Still picturing your spot?

If you want to talk through your actual yard rather than a general guide, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — I'm glad to help you land on a spot you'll feel good about all season.

Bringing it all together

Placement is one of those things that takes a little thought once and then quietly protects you all season — rain, snow, heat, or a calm clear night.

The distance and exhaust-direction rule itself comes from our carbon monoxide guide, and it doesn't bend for weather — everything on these pages builds around it, not instead of it. If you haven't read that guide yet, it's worth the fifteen minutes; nothing else in this whole series matters more.

From here, our cold-weather guide and our quiet-running guide go deeper on their specific topics, and our sizing guide is the place to start if you're still working out what generator to buy in the first place.

★ Let's settle it together, once

Between the safety rules, the weather, and the neighbors, picking a spot can feel like a lot to hold in your head at once. On a visit, I'll help you walk it, measure it, and settle on one — so it's one less thing to think about the next time the power goes out. Call or text me at (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 picking a safe spot and handling bad weather feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other 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. 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 don't do the licensed electrical or gas work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

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Picking a Safe Spot

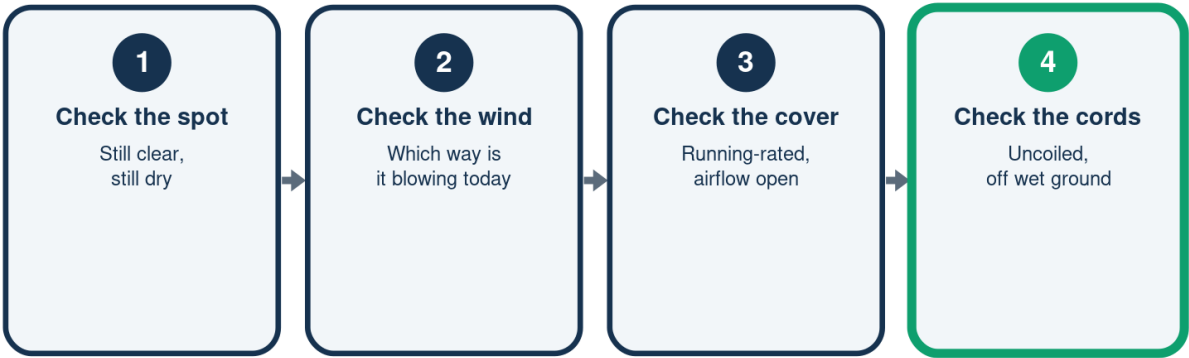
Four things to check before you press start

	What to check	Why it matters
Distance	20+ feet away	The carbon monoxide rule
Surface	Firm, dry, level ground	Keeps the engine happy
Exhaust direction	Away from every vent	Protects you and neighbors
What's underneath	Bare ground, not dry grass	A hot muffler is a fire risk

Get these four right and the rest of this guide is just details.

Before Every Storm

A two-minute check, every time



A two-minute check before you start it beats a surprise halfway through.

Safe Cover vs. Dangerous Enclosure

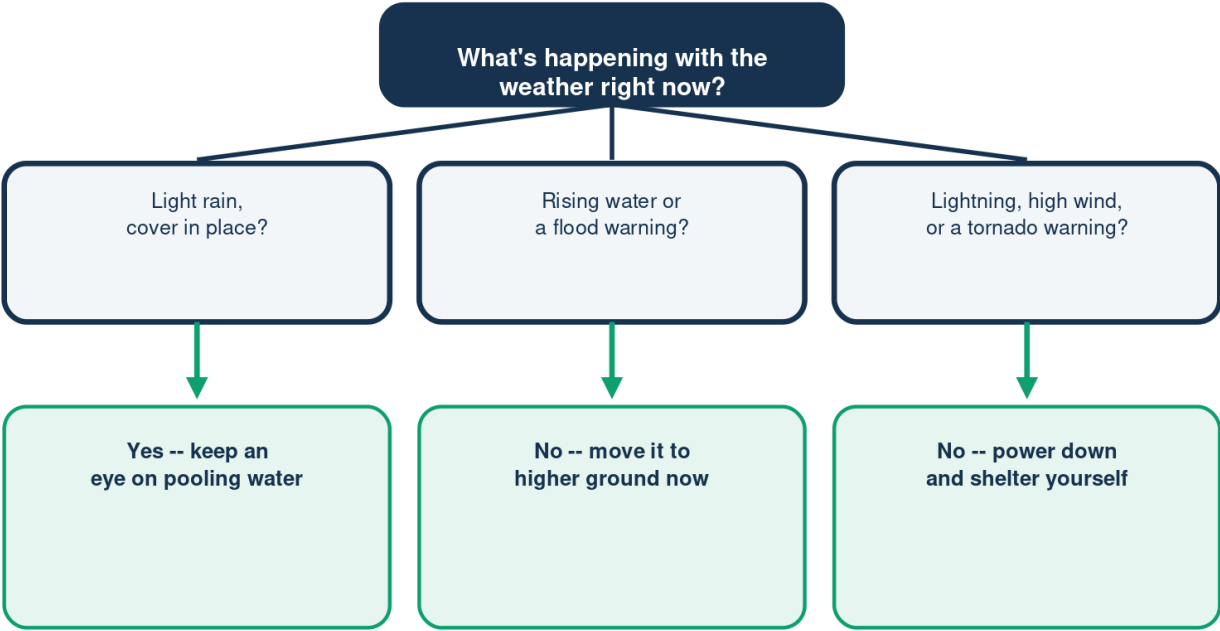
Airflow is the whole difference

	Airflow?	Safe to run in?
Running-rated tent/canopy	Open sides, real airflow	Yes
Tarp tucked to the ground	Sealed, no airflow	No
Storage shed or box	Fully enclosed	No
Open carport, well away	Open, but check CO distance	Only if distance is met

A safe cover breathes freely on every side -- if you have to ask, treat it as unsafe.

Should It Keep Running?

Let the weather, not convenience, decide



When in doubt, your safety outranks keeping the power on.

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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— *Bill*



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