



An Extended Guide · No. 1234

Off-Season and Long-Term Storage

Putting it away so
it wakes up ready

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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. Storage season is also when it's tempting to start it up indoors 'just to check it' — don't; the outdoor-only rule never takes a season off.

Putting it away so it wakes up ready

A generator spends most of its life waiting for you. How you put it away decides whether it starts on the first pull when you finally need it.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. More generators fail to start from a season of neglect than from anything actually wrong with the machine — and nearly all of it is preventable.

This guide walks through putting a generator to sleep properly, keeping it safe and ready while it waits, and waking it back up in spring without any surprises.

★ Fifteen minutes now saves an outage-day headache

If you'd rather I handle the whole put-away or spring wake-up for you, that's an easy visit. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you only do a handful of things before storing your generator, make it these.

- ❑ Deal with the fuel — either stabilize it, or run the carburetor dry. Don't just leave it be.
- ❑ Turn the fuel valve off before it goes into storage.
- ❑ Give it a light cleaning and let it dry fully before covering it.
- ❑ Store it cool, dry, and ventilated — away from living space and anything that sparks or burns.
- ❑ Keep the battery on a tender if it has electric start.
- ❑ Keep it off bare, damp concrete and out of reach of mice.

✓ The one habit that matters most

Stale fuel is, by a wide margin, the number-one reason a stored generator won't start later. Everything else on this page is good practice — the fuel is the one that actually breaks things.

The two paths for fuel, and picking one

Before it goes into storage, the fuel in the tank and carburetor needs one of two treatments — not both, and not neither.

Path one — stabilize it

Add a fuel stabilizer to the tank, following the product's instructions, then run the engine a few minutes so treated fuel works its way into the carburetor. This is the simpler path if you'd rather not drain anything, and it's the one most manuals describe for shorter storage stretches.

Path two — run it dry

Turn off the fuel valve and let the engine run until it uses up the fuel already in the carburetor and stalls out on its own. With no fuel left to go stale inside it, the carburetor stays cleaner through a long storage stretch. Follow your manual's exact steps for your model.

✓ Which one is right for you?

Either path works when done properly — your manual will tell you which one it recommends for your model and how long you're storing it. We go much deeper on stabilizers, fuel life, and safe fuel storage in our fuel-storage guide; this page is just the pre-storage decision.

Turn the fuel valve off

A small step that's easy to forget, and worth doing every time it goes into storage.

Most portable generators have a fuel valve, or petcock, between the tank and the carburetor. Shutting it off before storage stops fuel from slowly seeping into the carburetor over the months, which is a common contributor to gummed-up, stuck-open carburetors later.

If you're running the carburetor dry as your storage method, shutting this valve is actually the first step — you close it and let the engine use up what's left before it stalls.

✓ Make it part of the ritual

Fuel valve off, then whichever fuel path you've chosen, then the rest of this checklist — do it in the same order every time and it becomes second nature.

A light cleaning before it sleeps

A generator doesn't need to be spotless, but a few minutes of cleaning before storage pays off.

- Wipe down dust, grass clippings, and grime from the outside.
- Clear debris away from the air intake and cooling fins.
- Check for fuel or oil residue and wipe it away — both attract dust and grime over time.
- Let it run briefly and cool completely before you put a cover on it — never cover it warm.

This is also a good moment to glance over cords, the fuel cap, and the general condition of the unit, so anything that needs attention gets noticed now instead of during an outage.

Where it should sleep

The right storage spot is cool, dry, and ventilated — and it is never inside your living space.

A garage or shed works well for storage, even though neither is ever acceptable for running it. The goal is somewhere the temperature doesn't swing to extremes, moisture stays low, and there's airflow rather than a sealed, damp corner.

- Keep it away from furnaces, water heaters, pilot lights, and anything else with a flame.
- Store any fuel containers separately, away from the house, per the fuel-storage guide.
- Avoid a spot that floods or gets damp — moisture invites rust and corrosion.

! Storage space, not living space — ever

Never store it in a basement, an attached living area, or anywhere fumes or a fuel leak could reach where people sleep. This matters even though it's off — a small fuel leak in the wrong spot is still a hazard.

Covering it properly

A good cover keeps dust and moisture off a resting generator — as long as it's the right kind of cover.

A storage cover, used on a generator that's off and fully cooled, is a simple and effective way to keep dust and moisture away during the off-season. This is different from a running-rated cover meant for use while it's operating outdoors — don't mix the two up.

Make sure it's bone dry before you cover it, and check underneath occasionally through a long storage stretch so you'd notice a pest or moisture problem early rather than in spring.

✓ Breathable beats airtight

A breathable storage cover is kinder to the generator than one that seals in humidity. If your storage spot is already dry and enclosed, a light cover may be all you need.

The battery that waits with it

If your generator has electric start, its battery needs a little attention too, or it may not be there for you in spring.

A battery that sits unused for months, especially through cold weather, tends to lose its charge and can even be damaged if it's allowed to fully drain. A small battery tender, the kind made for cars, motorcycles, and boats, keeps it topped off safely through the whole storage stretch.

If you don't have a tender, disconnecting the battery and storing it somewhere temperate, then charging it fully before spring, is a reasonable fallback — just don't simply forget about it for months.

✓ Recoil start is the forgiving backup

If your model also has a pull-cord, that's one more reason it's a nice feature to have — it doesn't care whether the battery was tended all winter.

Keep it up off damp concrete

A concrete garage or shed floor holds more moisture than it looks like it does, and that moisture works against bare metal over time.

A simple wood pallet, a few boards, or a rubber mat under the generator keeps it from sitting directly on cold, damp concrete for months at a stretch. It's a small step that helps guard against rust on the frame and undercarriage.

This matters most in an unheated garage or shed where condensation is common, and especially for anyone storing it through a full Ohio winter.

Keeping mice and pests out

A quiet, sheltered generator is exactly the kind of cozy spot a mouse looks for — and chewed wiring is a nasty spring surprise.

Problem	What helps
Mice nesting inside the housing	Steel wool in larger openings
Chewed wiring or fuel lines	A quick look-over each spring
Insects in the fuel system	Keep the fuel cap snug and sealed
Pests drawn to food residue	Store it away from feed or trash

✓ **A simple pest check**

A minute peeking under the cover every few weeks through the off-season catches a problem early, before it turns into chewed-up wiring you discover in spring.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Where and how you store it looks a little different depending on your kind of home.

If you live in town or the suburbs

An in-town garage or shed is usually close, dry, and easy to check on through the off-season — the main job is just not forgetting about it.

- A smaller unit is easy to tuck into a corner of the garage, up off the floor.
- Close quarters make security simple — a cable lock through a fixed point is quick insurance.
- Check on it monthly; it's a short walk from the house.
- Keep it away from the water heater or furnace if those share the garage.

If you are out in the country on a well

A farmhouse or rural property often means a bigger generator, a bigger barn or outbuilding to store it in, and more distance to remember to check on it.

- A larger generator deserves the same off-the-concrete, ventilated spot — just scaled up.
- Outbuildings often have more mice and more room for them to hide — the pest check matters more here.
- If it's stored farther from the house, put a reminder on the calendar so it's not forgotten until the next outage.
- A well-pump household especially doesn't want to discover stale fuel mid-outage — test it before the season you'll need it most.

★ Not sure your storage spot is right?

Send me a photo of where you're planning to store it and I'll tell you honestly if it needs anything — ventilation, a pallet underneath, better security. Call (330) 200-8042.

Security while it sleeps

A generator sitting idle for months is worth remembering isn't invisible to everyone.

A cable and lock through a fixed point — a stud, a shelving unit, an eye bolt anchored into a wall — is a simple deterrent for a generator stored in a garage or shed. It won't stop a determined thief, but it removes the easy, opportunistic kind of theft.

- Keep it out of sight from the street or driveway if you can.
- A locked shed or garage door matters more than the generator lock itself.
- Note the model information somewhere safe, in case you ever need it for a police report or insurance.

The #1 reason it won't start later

If you take one lesson from this whole guide, let it be this one.

Stale fuel left sitting in the tank and carburetor is, far and away, the most common reason a stored generator refuses to start when it's finally needed. Gasoline breaks down over months, leaving behind a gummy residue that clogs the tiny passages inside a carburetor — and that's a repair, not a quick fix.

! Don't skip the fuel step to save five minutes

Every other item in this guide is good housekeeping. Handling the fuel — stabilizing it or running it dry — is the one step that actually determines whether the generator starts next time. Don't skip it.

A simple storage checklist

Run through this each time it goes away for the season.

- ☐ Fuel stabilized, or the carburetor run dry — one or the other, every time.
- ☐ Fuel valve turned off.
- ☐ A light cleaning done, and the unit fully cooled and dry.
- ☐ Stored cool, dry, and ventilated — away from living space and any flame or pilot light.
- ☐ Battery on a tender, or charged and stored separately.
- ☐ Up off bare concrete, covered, and checked occasionally for pests.

✓ Tape a copy to the generator

A small printed copy of this list taped inside the storage cover means you're never trying to remember it from scratch next fall.

The spring wake-up

Waking a generator back up after months of rest deserves the same care as putting it away.

Don't just yank the cord and hope. A quick look-over first — oil, fuel, the battery, the general condition — catches anything that needs attention before you're relying on the generator in an actual outage.

This is also a good moment to think about whether it's due for its regular maintenance, separate from anything storage-specific — our maintenance guide covers oil changes, filters, and the rest of that routine in full.

Spring wake-up checklist

Work through this before the storm season starts, not during the first outage.

- ☐ Check the oil level and look for any change in color or smell.
- ☐ If you ran it dry for storage, add fresh fuel; if you stabilized it, confirm it still looks and smells normal.
- ☐ Reconnect and check the battery, or bring it up to full charge.
- ☐ Wipe it down, check cords and the fuel cap, and look it over for anything chewed or nested in.
- ☐ Start it outdoors and let it run under some load — don't just idle it for thirty seconds and call it done.

★ A spring check-up, done for you

If you'd rather someone else confirm it's truly ready before the season's first storm, that's exactly the kind of visit I do all spring. Call (330) 200-8042.

If it won't start after storage

Most post-storage no-starts trace back to one thing: the fuel.

If it sat with untreated fuel over the winter, gummed-up passages in the carburetor are the likely culprit, and that's usually a small-engine shop's job to clear properly rather than something to force your way through.

- Confirm the fuel valve is open and there's fresh fuel before assuming the worst.
- Check the oil level — a low-oil shutoff will block starting on purpose.
- A weak battery is common after winter storage; try the recoil cord if you have one.
- If it cranks but won't catch, don't keep forcing it — that can flood the engine further.

✓ This is where prevention wins

Every one of these is far less likely if you handled the fuel properly going into storage. Our maintenance guide covers deeper troubleshooting if the basics don't solve it.

Common storage mistakes

A short list of avoidable slip-ups accounts for most stored generators that won't start.

- **Leaving fuel untreated** for months, the single biggest cause of a no-start.
- **Storing it somewhere damp or unventilated**, inviting rust and corrosion.
- **Forgetting the battery entirely** until it's dead or damaged.
- **Covering it while still warm**, trapping moisture underneath.
- **Never checking on it** until the day of an outage, when it's too late to fix anything.

! And never test-run it indoors

If you want to confirm it still starts during the off-season, that's a smart habit — just do it outside, exactly like any other time. A quick indoor test is never worth the carbon-monoxide risk.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about putting a generator away and waking it back up.

Q: How long can I leave gasoline in the tank untreated?

Not long — untreated gasoline can start breaking down in a matter of months. If you're not running it again soon, stabilize the fuel or run the carburetor dry before storing it.

Q: Do I really need a battery tender?

If it has electric start, yes, it's worth it. A battery left completely unattended for months often loses its charge or is damaged by the time you need it — a small tender prevents that.

Q: Can I store it in my basement over the winter?

No — keep it out of any living space, even when it's off, because of fuel fumes and fire-safety concerns. A garage or shed, away from flames and pilot lights, is the right spot.

Q: Is running the carburetor dry better than stabilizer?

Both work well when done properly. Running it dry avoids any fuel sitting in the carburetor at all; stabilizer is simpler and doesn't require draining. Your manual will tell you which it recommends.

Q: What's the very first thing I should check in spring?

The fuel and the oil, in that order. If it sat with treated fuel and clean oil, most generators start up with little fuss after a proper winter's rest.

★ Ready for a hand either direction?

Putting it away right, or waking it back up with confidence — I'm glad to help with either. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

A quick visit, twice a year, beats a surprise

Two short visits a year — one heading into storage, one waking it back up — is all it really takes to keep a generator reliable for years.

On a put-away visit, I'll handle the fuel decision, the cleaning, and make sure it's tucked away somewhere sensible. On a spring visit, I'll check the oil, the battery, and actually run it under load so you know, not hope, that it's ready.

I don't sell generators or parts, so there's nothing for me to push on you — just an honest look and a machine that's ready when you need it.

★ Two visits, real peace of mind

A first visit is a flat \$99, and every visit is 30-day come-back-free. Call or text (330) 200-8042 to get on the schedule before the season turns.

A final word on waiting well

A generator's whole job is to be ready on a day you didn't choose — and how it waits is what makes that possible.

None of this takes long. Handle the fuel, give it a dry and sensible place to rest, look in on it now and then, and it will reward you with a first-pull start when the power finally goes out.

- Fuel handled — stabilized or run dry — is the single habit that matters most.
- A cool, dry, ventilated spot away from living space keeps the rest simple.
- A quick spring check-up turns hoping it starts into knowing it will.

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 storing a generator for the off-season 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.

★ 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

Two Paths for the Fuel

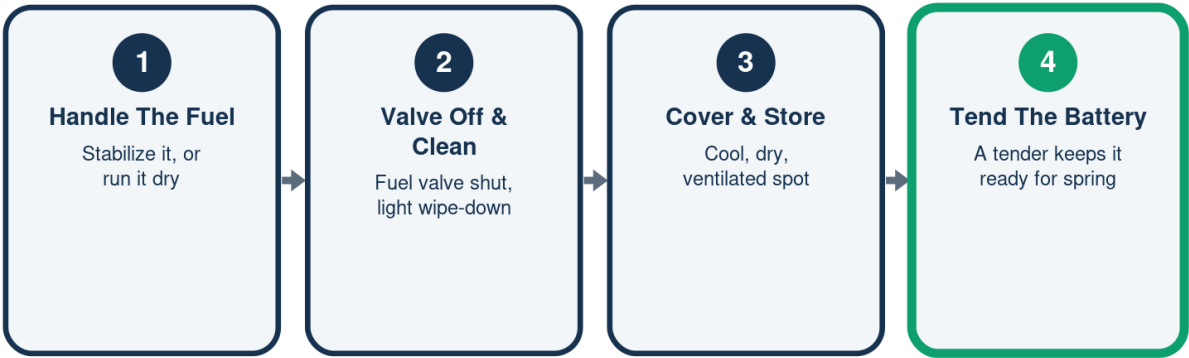
Pick one before it goes into storage

	What You Do	Why It Works
Stabilize it	Treat it, run it in	No draining needed
Run it dry	Valve off, let it stall	Nothing left to gum up
Either path	Follow your manual	Both work, done right
Leaving it untreated	Fuel just sits there	The #1 reason it won't start

Do one of the first two. The last row is how generators end up at the repair shop.

Putting It Away, Step by Step

The same order, every time



Same order, every time, and it becomes second nature.

Where It Should (and Shouldn't) Sleep

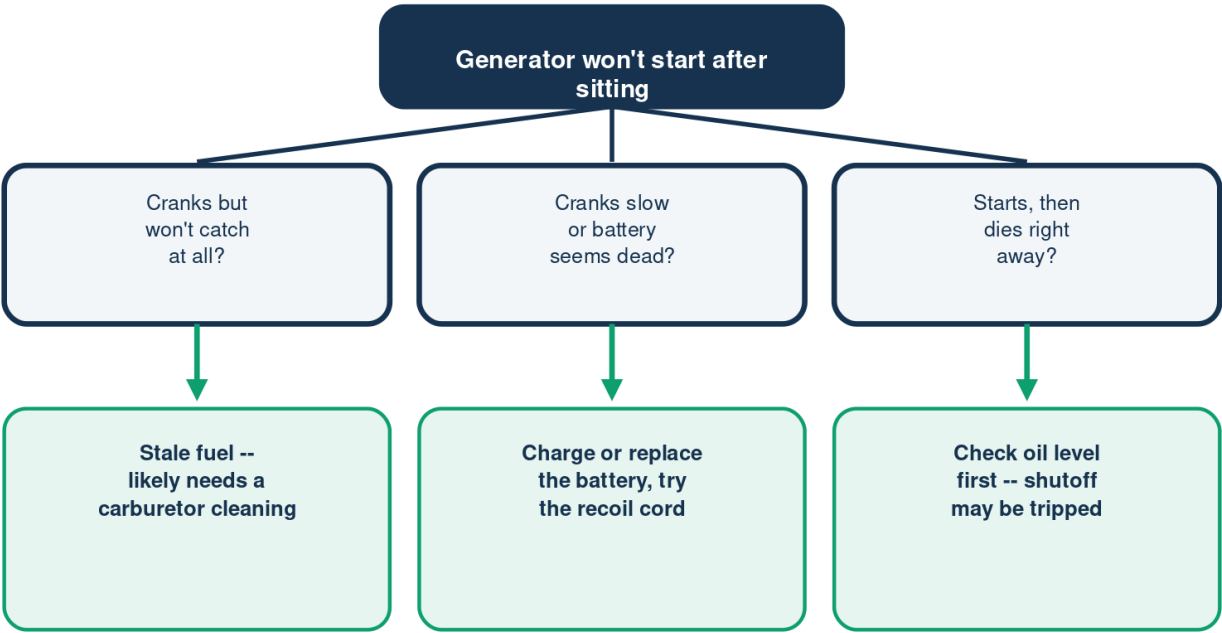
Storage space is never living space

	Do This	Not This
Location	Garage or shed	Basement or living space
Surface	A pallet or boards	Bare damp concrete
Nearby	Away from flames	Next to a pilot light
Pests	Steel wool in gaps	An open invitation

The fuel and fumes don't take the season off.

Won't Start After Storage?

Most causes trace back to the fuel



Properly stabilized or drained fuel prevents most of this in the first place.

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



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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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