



An Extended Guide · No. 1430

Keeping the Essentials On in an Outage

Phones, internet, medical,
lights, and the fridge

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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✓ The best news first — this one is safe indoors

Here is the best news about a portable power station, and the reason it earns a place in your home: it is a big rechargeable battery in a case, not an engine. It burns no fuel, so it gives off no exhaust and no carbon monoxide — the invisible, deadly gas that makes a gas generator a strictly outdoors-only machine. That means a power station is safe to use right inside your home, in any room, with the windows closed — beside your chair, on the nightstand, next to a medical device. A few simple habits keep it that way: charge it with the cord it came with, give it a little air while it works (don't bury it under a blanket or shut it in a tight cabinet), keep it away from water and from baking heat, and never use one that is cracked, soaked, or swollen. That's why it can keep your essentials — your phone, your internet, your medical device, a lamp — running right where you sit, safely, when the power goes out.

Keeping the important things on when the lights go out

When the power fails, you don't need to run the whole house — you need to keep a handful of important things going: your phone, your internet, a medical device, some light, and the fridge. This guide shows you how a power station covers those essentials, calmly and safely.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30-plus years of helping folks through storms and outages, I've learned that a calm outage comes down to a short list and a few simple habits, not a giant machine. We'll walk it together, one plain idea at a time.

You don't need to be technical for any of this. If you can charge a phone and flip a light switch, you already know enough. The rest is just deciding, ahead of time, what matters most — and we'll do that together.

★ Nothing to sell, just honest advice

I don't sell power stations and earn no commission, so this is just plain help. If you'd like a hand building your own outage plan, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll sort it out — free.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you already know how to keep the essentials on and make a charge last.

- ❑ In an outage you're not powering everything — just the essentials: phones, the internet, any medical device, a few lights, the fridge in cycles.
- ❑ Those essentials are small, steady loads, which is exactly what a power station does best — often for a good long while on a modest unit.
- ❑ Your Wi-Fi router and modem sip very little but keep you online, and keep a medical-alert and cordless-phone base alive too.
- ❑ Skip the hungry, heat-making things — space heaters, hair dryers, kettles — they drain a battery fast and crowd out what matters.
- ❑ When the battery runs low, put people first: keep the phone, the internet, and any medical device on, and switch the extras off.
- ❑ Charge the station ahead of time, conserve while you use it, and recharge from the car or the sun if the outage drags on.

✓ One line to hold onto

A power station isn't for running the house — it's for keeping you reachable, safe, and comfortable through the hours the lights are out.

Start with a short must-run list

The secret to a calm outage isn't a giant battery — it's a short, clear list of what truly must stay on. Everything gets easier once you have it.

Walk through your home and ask a simple question: if the power were out for a few hours, or overnight, what would I genuinely need running? For most folks the honest answer is a short one — a phone, the internet, any medical device, a couple of lights, and keeping the fridge cold. That's the must-run list.

Notice what's not on it: the range, the dryer, the space heater, the whole house lit up like normal. Leaving those off isn't going without — it's being smart about where the battery goes. The essentials are small and steady, and a power station carries them beautifully.

✓ Write it down, once

Jot your must-run list on a card and keep it with the station. When an outage hits, you won't have to think — you'll just plug in what's on the list, in order, and relax.

Phones, tablets, and laptops

These are the easiest wins of all, and often the most important — they keep you reachable, informed, and connected to the people who matter.

Phones, tablets, and laptops sip a very small amount of power, so even a modest station can keep a household's devices charged and running for a long time. In an outage, that means you can call family, check the weather and the utility's updates, and keep a lifeline to the outside world.

A laptop has its own battery, so it's especially thrifty — you're just topping it up now and then. Charge phones as they dip rather than leaving everything plugged in at once, and a small station will keep everyone reachable through even a long evening without breaking a sweat.

✓ Reachable is the real prize

Of everything a power station does in an outage, keeping a phone charged may matter most. It's how you call for help, hear from loved ones, and know when the power's coming back.

The internet — your router and modem

Here's a small miracle folks often overlook: keeping your internet alive in an outage costs almost nothing in power, and does an enormous amount of good.

Your Wi-Fi router and the modem beside it draw only a tiny trickle of power — among the thriftiest things in the house. Plug them into the station and your internet stays up, so your phones, tablets, and computers keep working, streaming, and making calls even while the neighborhood is dark.

There's a quieter benefit, too. Many home-phone bases, medical-alert bases, and security devices run through that same internet gear. Keep the router and modem powered and you often keep those lifelines alive as well — for pennies of the battery. It's one of the best trades a power station offers.

✓ Tiny draw, big payoff

If you do just one thing beyond charging phones, keep the router and modem on. The draw is tiny, and it keeps you connected to help, family, and information all at once.

Lights — steady, safe, and flame-free

A little light changes everything about an outage. It turns a scary, stumbling dark into an ordinary evening — and a power station does it far more safely than the old ways.

LED lamps and bulbs use very little power, so a station can keep a room or two lit for many hours, even overnight. Set a lamp where you spend your time, and you can read, cook, take your medicine, and move around safely without groping in the dark.

And here's the safety of it: an LED lamp on a station means no candles and no open flame. Candles and oil lamps are a real fire risk, especially if you doze off or a pet knocks one over. Steady, bright, flameless light is one of the kindest things a power station gives you.

! Please skip the candles

The temptation in an outage is to light candles, but they're a genuine fire hazard, especially overnight. A power station running LED lamps gives you safe, steady light all evening — no flame anywhere in the house.

Medical devices

For anyone who depends on a powered medical device, an outage isn't just an inconvenience — and a power station can be a real comfort. Let's be both encouraging and honest about it.

Many medical devices are a fine fit for a station. A CPAP, for instance, is a small, steady draw that a modest unit can carry through the night, especially with the heated humidifier turned off. The clean power a good station gives is gentle on sensitive equipment, and it sits quietly and safely right beside the bed.

The honest part: a power station is one helpful layer of a backup plan, never the whole plan for medical care. Keep whatever backup your provider recommends, and for a device you truly depend on, confirm the details with its maker. Our CPAP and oxygen guides go deeper — and oxygen users especially should always keep the no-power backup tanks their supplier provides.

! One layer of a plan, not the whole plan

For anything medical, treat a power station as a helpful backup among others, not a replacement for your doctor's or supplier's plan. When a device keeps someone safe, plan for more than one way to power it.

The fridge, in cycles

Keeping food cold is one of the most valuable things a station can do in a longer outage — and the trick is that you don't run the fridge nonstop.

A fridge doesn't run all the time even when the power's on — its compressor cycles on and off to hold the temperature. A larger power station can nurse a fridge along the same way, running it in turns rather than continuously, to keep the food safe without draining the battery dry.

There's real skill to doing this well — how long a fridge and freezer stay cold with the door shut, when to run the station, and how to watch the temperature. Rather than cram it in here, we give it a whole guide: see our fridge-and-freezer guide for the food-safety clock and the cycling method, step by step.

✓ Doors closed is half the battle

A closed fridge holds its cold for hours on its own. Keep the door shut, run the station in cycles, and you can keep food safe far longer than the battery alone might suggest.

A fan, and a little comfort

Once the true essentials are covered, a station can spare a little for plain comfort — and in the right weather, comfort is close to an essential itself.

A box fan or a small fan draws modestly and can make a hot, still house far more bearable in a summer outage — moving air helps you feel cooler even when you can't run the air conditioning. For many folks, especially in the heat, that's not a luxury; it's how you stay comfortable and safe.

The same goes for small comforts that keep spirits up: charging a tablet to watch a show, keeping a favorite lamp on, running a small radio for news and company. A power station lets an outage feel less like an emergency and more like a quiet evening — and that steadiness is worth a lot.

✓ Comfort counts, within reason

A fan, a show, a lit room — these keep an outage from feeling frightening. Just remember they share the battery with the essentials, so enjoy them with one eye on the charge.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The essentials are much the same everywhere, but how easily you cover them — and for how long — depends a good deal on where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, in the suburbs, or in an apartment, outages tend to be short, and your water keeps flowing from the city main. So your essentials are the comfortable, everyday kind, and a modest station usually covers them with room to spare.

- A short outage means phones, the internet, a couple of lights, and a CPAP are easily handled on a modest unit.
- City water keeps running, so there's no pump to worry about — you're powering comfort and connection, not plumbing.
- In an apartment, where a generator isn't allowed, a station may be your only realistic backup — and it covers the essentials beautifully.
- You recharge from the wall between outages and are always ready for the next short one.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, the essentials list grows a little and the outages run longer, so you plan for more hours and lean on the sun to refill the tank. And there's one thing to be honest about.

- Longer outages mean you'll want to conserve carefully and recharge the station from solar or the car as the days pass.
- Be honest about the well pump: when the power's out the pump is out, and a portable station almost never runs a 240-volt pump. Store drinking water for the outage.
- Keep the indoor essentials — phones, medical, internet, lights, the fridge in cycles — running safely inside, while a generator handles the heavy 240-volt loads.
- Think of the station as the quiet indoor partner to a generator, not a whole-house well solution.

★ Let's build your essentials list together

Whether you're in a tidy apartment or a farmhouse on a well, I'll help you decide what must stay on and size a station to match — honestly, with nothing to sell. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

When the battery's limited, prioritize

A power station holds a fixed amount of energy, so a little prioritizing goes a long way. The idea is simple: essentials first, extras second.

Picture the battery as a budget you're spending down over the outage. The must-run list — phones, the internet, a medical device, a bit of light, the fridge in cycles — comes first, always. Everything else is optional and waits its turn, or goes without, depending on how long the outage runs.

The other half of prioritizing is switching off the quiet wasters. A charger left plugged in with nothing on it, a device on standby, a lamp in an empty room — these sip from the battery for no good reason. Unplug what you're not using and you stretch the charge for the things that matter.

✓ Essentials first, always

If you ever have to choose, the order is people first: staying reachable, staying safe, keeping any medical device on. Comfort and convenience come after, and only if there's power to spare.

A simple plug-in order

When the lights go out, it helps to know the order to plug things in — so the most important loads are covered before the nice-to-haves.

A sensible order, for most homes: first, any medical device that someone depends on. Next, the phones — your link to help and family. Then the router and modem, to keep the internet and its lifelines alive. After that, a light or two where you'll spend your time. And if there's room in the budget, the fridge in cycles and a fan for comfort.

You don't have to follow this to the letter — your home and your needs set the order. The point is to decide it calmly ahead of time, not in the dark during a storm. A written list on a card by the station makes it effortless.

✓ **Decide it before the storm**

The worst time to figure out priorities is by flashlight during an outage. Settle your order now, write it down, and an outage becomes a routine you follow rather than a scramble.

Stretching the runtime

A few easy habits can make a station's charge last far longer than you'd expect — sometimes dramatically so. Here's how to make every watt-hour count.

- **Turn off the heat-makers.** Space heaters, hair dryers, kettles, and the like are the biggest drains of all. Leave them off and everything else lasts far longer.
- **Cycle the big loads.** Run the fridge in turns rather than nonstop, and it sips from the battery instead of gulping.
- **Dim and simplify.** One well-placed LED lamp beats three bright ones; a single charging phone beats a strip full of idle chargers.
- **Unplug the idlers.** Anything on standby, or charging with nothing to charge, is wasting power — pull it.
- **Recharge as you go.** On a long outage, top the station up from the car or a solar panel so you're refilling the tank while you draw from it.

✓ Small habits, big hours

None of these is hard, and together they can turn an evening's charge into a whole day's. Heat off, loads cycled, idlers unplugged, sun or car refilling — that's the whole art of it.

Keep the phones for when you need them

In a long outage, a charged phone is your single most important tool — so it's worth a little discipline to keep one ready for a real need.

It's tempting to pass a long dark evening on your phone, but a screen at full brightness, streaming video, drains a battery you may need later to call for help or hear from family. A little restraint keeps that lifeline strong.

Some gentle habits help: dim the screen, close what you're not using, and consider keeping one phone in the house topped up and set aside for emergencies while others are used more freely. If the outage stretches on, that reserved phone is your ace in the hole — always ready to reach the outside world.

✓ One phone, always ready

In a long outage, keep at least one phone charged and set aside for calls that matter. Entertainment can wait; reaching help and family cannot.

Your written outage checklist

When the power fails, a simple checklist turns worry into routine. Here's one you can copy onto a card and keep right with your station.

- ☐ Plug in any medical device first, then your phones.
- ☐ Add the router and modem to keep the internet and its lifelines alive.
- ☐ Set up an LED lamp or two where you'll sit — and skip the candles.
- ☐ Turn off and unplug the heat-makers and any idle draws.
- ☐ For a longer outage, run the fridge in cycles and recharge from the car or sun.
- ☐ Keep one phone topped up and set aside for emergencies.

✓ A card by the station beats a memory

Copy this onto an index card and tape it to the station, or keep it in the drawer alongside. In a stressful moment, a list you can follow beats anything you have to remember.

Practice once, before you need it

The difference between a calm outage and a stressful one is often just having done it once before. A quiet practice run pays for itself.

Some ordinary afternoon, set the station up as if the power were out. Plug in your phone, your router, and a lamp; turn on the AC outlets; and see how it all behaves. Time how long a full charge carries your essentials if you like. There's no pressure, and you'll learn exactly what to expect.

A practice run also flushes out the little surprises — a cord you're missing, an outlet section you forgot to switch on, a device that needs a special adapter. Far better to find those on a sunny day than by flashlight during a storm. And it turns the whole thing from mysterious to familiar.

✓ Familiar beats mysterious

Ten quiet minutes practicing now means that when a real outage comes, you're not learning the station — you're just using it, the way you'd flip a light switch.

Common mistakes people make

A few avoidable slip-ups cause most outage-day disappointment. Now you'll know them in advance.

- **Trying to run heat-makers.** A space heater or hair dryer will drain even a large unit fast, or won't start on a small one. Keep them off the list.
- **Not conserving.** Leaving lights blazing and chargers idle burns through a charge you'll wish you had later.
- **Letting it sit uncharged.** A station forgotten in a closet, half-empty, is the number-one reason one disappoints when the storm finally comes.
- **Forgetting the internet.** Skipping the router and modem gives up your phones' and lifelines' connection for almost no power saved.
- **No plan.** Figuring out priorities in the dark, mid-outage, instead of deciding calmly ahead of time.

! The saddest outage call

The disappointment I hear most is 'it won't run my heater' — often followed by a station that was left uncharged. Keep it topped up, keep the heat-makers off, and it'll be there for the essentials when you need it.

A myth, cleared up

A couple of ideas about outage power come up so often they're worth naming outright and setting straight.

Q: 'A power station will keep my whole house running like normal.'

It won't, and it isn't meant to. A power station keeps the essentials on — phones, the internet, a medical device, lights, the fridge in cycles — not the range, the dryer, central air, or the whole house lit up. That's not a shortcoming; it's the honest design. It keeps you reachable, safe, and comfortable, which is what an outage really calls for.

Q: 'If it can't run everything, it's not worth having.'

Far from it. Keeping your phone, your internet, your medical device, and some light going through an outage is enormously valuable — often the difference between a scary night and an ordinary one. You don't need the whole house; you need the essentials, safely, and that's exactly what it delivers.

✓ When you're unsure, ask

There's no silly question about any of this. If you're not sure whether your must-run list fits a particular station, that's a fine reason to call me before you buy, not after.

A few questions to ask yourself

Before an outage — or before you shop — these plain questions turn 'essentials' into a real, personal plan.

- What would I truly need running in an outage, and for how many hours?
- Is anyone in the house dependent on a medical device that needs power?
- Which of my essentials are small and steady, and am I tempted by anything hungry or heat-making?
- How would I recharge the station if the outage ran long — the car, or solar?
- Do I have a written plan and a practiced routine, or would I be figuring it out in the dark?

★ We can answer these together

If you're not sure how to answer these, that's normal, and it's just what I'm here for. Tell me about your home and your must-haves and we'll build a simple plan. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Building your essentials plan

Put it all together and an outage plan is a short, calm thing — a list, an order, and a couple of habits. Here's the whole of it.

Start with your must-run list: phones, the internet, any medical device, a couple of lights, and the fridge in cycles. Decide the order you'd plug them in, essentials first. Keep the station charged and ready, with a checklist card beside it and a practice run behind you.

Then, when the lights go out, you simply follow the plan: plug in the essentials in order, switch off the heat-makers and idlers, conserve as you go, and recharge from the car or the sun if it drags on. That's it — no scramble, no worry, just the important things staying on while you wait for the power to return.

✓ The whole guide in one line

Keep it charged, know your essentials, plug them in first, skip the heat-makers, and conserve. Do that and a power station keeps you reachable, safe, and comfortable through the dark.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about keeping the essentials on in an outage, answered plainly.

Q: What should I power first in an outage?

People first: any medical device someone depends on, then your phones, then the router and modem to keep the internet and its lifelines alive. After that, a light or two, and the fridge in cycles if the outage runs long. Decide the order calmly ahead of time and write it down.

Q: How long will a power station keep my essentials going?

Longer than most folks expect, because the essentials are small, steady loads. Phones, a router, and a couple of LED lamps sip very little, so even a modest unit can carry them for many hours; add the fridge in cycles and you're leaning on a larger one. Recharging from the car or sun stretches it further.

Q: Should I keep the internet on, or save the power?

Keep it on — it's one of the best trades there is. A router and modem draw only a tiny trickle but keep your phones, computers, and often your home-phone and medical-alert bases working. For pennies of the battery, you stay connected to help and family.

Q: What shouldn't I try to run?

The hungry, heat-making things: space heaters, hair dryers, kettles, toasters, microwaves. They drain a battery fast or won't start at all on a smaller unit, and they crowd out the essentials. Plan to stay warm another way and let the station carry the steady, sensible loads.

★ Still have a question?

That's what I'm here for, and there's never a silly one. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll give you a straight, friendly answer.

You don't have to do this alone

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

I hope this guide made keeping the essentials running 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 licensed electrical work myself — for anything that needs to be wired into your home, 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

Your Must-Run Essentials

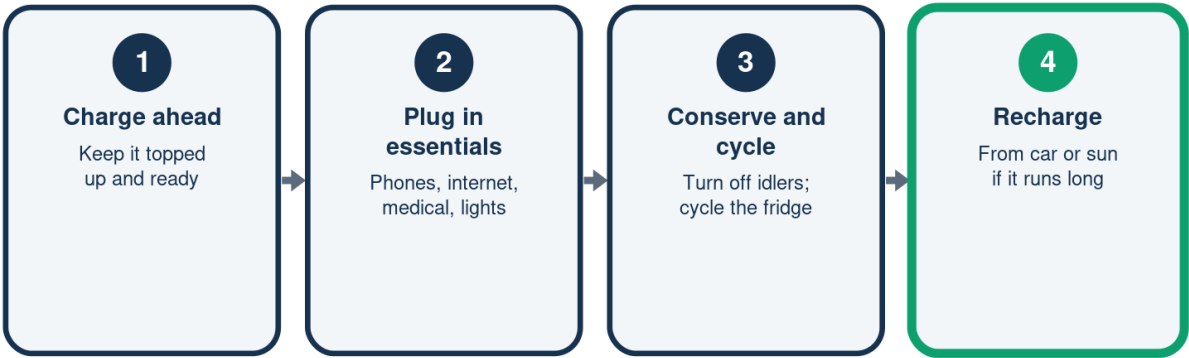
The handful worth keeping on in any outage

	Why it matters	Draw on it
Phones, tablets	Stay reachable	Very small
Router and modem	Stay online	Tiny
A CPAP	Rest safely	Small, steady
The fridge	Food stays safe	Big surge, cycled
LED lights	See safely	Small

Small, steady loads are exactly what a battery does best.

Outage Plan in Four Steps

A calm routine, decided ahead of time



Essentials first; heat-makers off; conserve as you go.

Keep On / Turn Off

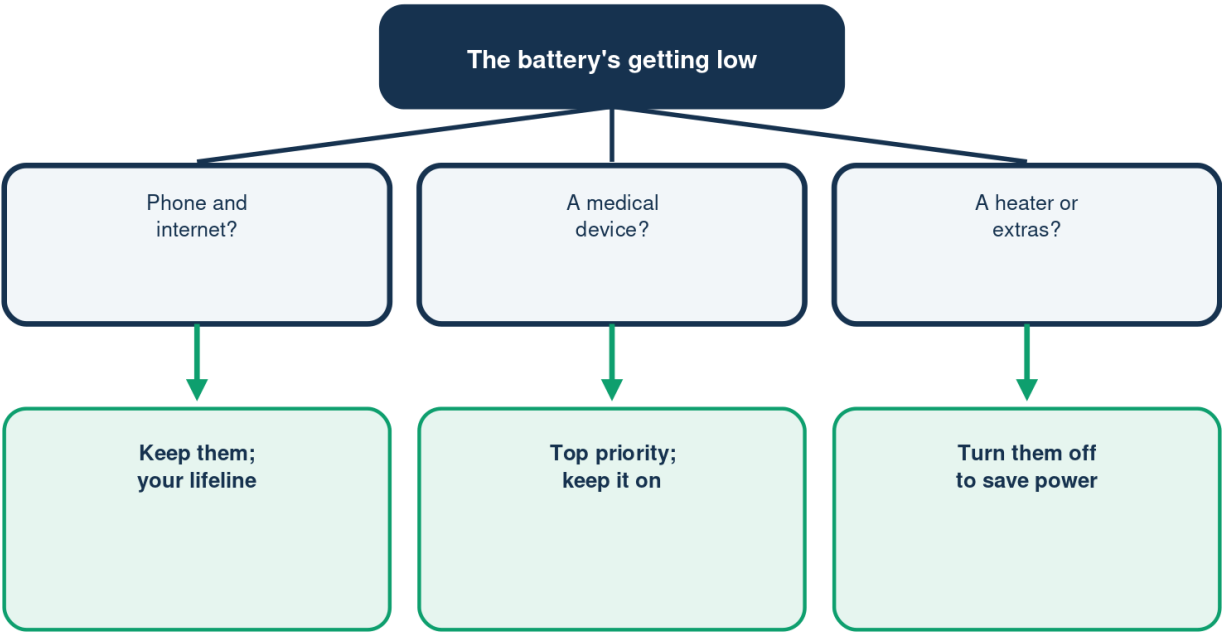
Where the battery should and shouldn't go

	Keep on	Turn off
Communication	Phone and router	Idle chargers
Health, comfort	CPAP, a lamp	Space heater
Kitchen	Fridge, cycled	Kettle, microwave
Extras	One small fan	Hair dryer

If it makes heat, turn it off; a battery drains fast on it.

Battery Low: What Stays On?

When the charge dips, put people first



When it's low, essentials only: reach for help, stay safe, keep food cold.

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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