

Backup for an Outage

THE 60-SECOND VERSION

- 1 A VoIP phone dies in an outage unless something keeps its gear powered.
- 2 Back up the whole chain: the modem, the router, and the phone box — not just one.
- 3 Options: a provider battery module, a small UPS, or a cellular base with a battery.
- 4 A whole-home generator is the bigger fix for frequent, long outages.
- 5 Always keep a charged cell phone — it's the ultimate 911 backstop.

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Power-Outage Backup for a VoIP Home Phone — Batteries & a Cell Fallback

Keeping your internet-based home phone working when the power goes out.

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1728** —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

In a hurry? Here's the whole thing on one page. An internet-based home phone — cable voice, a VoIP adapter, or similar — runs on power and internet, so it goes silent the moment the electricity or the internet goes out, unless you've added a backup. The fix is simple and affordable: put the phone's whole chain of equipment on battery, and always keep a charged cell phone as your final way to reach 911.

- A VoIP phone dies in an outage unless something keeps its gear powered.
- Back up the whole chain: the modem, the router, and the phone box — not just one.
- Options: a provider battery module, a small UPS, or a cellular base with a battery.
- A whole-home generator is the bigger fix for frequent, long outages.
- Always keep a charged cell phone — it's the ultimate 911 backstop.

WATCH OUT

The most common mistake is putting a battery on only one piece — say, the phone box — and forgetting the modem and router. If any link in the chain loses power, the phone goes quiet. Back up the whole chain, or none of it helps.

1. Why This Matters

The one thing the old phone did that the new one doesn't.

Let me start with the heart of it. For a hundred years, the old copper telephone had one quiet virtue people rarely thought about until they needed it: it worked when the power was out. The phone drew its own little bit of electricity from the phone line itself, so a storm could knock out the lights and the phone would still have a dial tone.

A newer internet-based phone doesn't do that on its own. It runs on your household electricity and your internet connection, and when either one stops, so does the phone. That's the single real trade-off of the switch to modern phone service, and it's the thing I most want folks to plan for rather than discover during a storm.

The good news — and I'll say it right up front — is that this is entirely solvable, and not expensively. A little planning and a modest battery or two will keep your phone working through the outages we get around here. This guide walks you through exactly how, in plain English.

GOOD TO KNOW

This matters most for anyone who relies on the phone for safety — folks living alone, anyone with a medical condition, or a household where a storm outage could mean needing to call for help. If that's you, read on carefully; this is worth getting right.

2. Why a VoIP Phone Goes Quiet

Follow the power, and it makes sense.

To back up the phone properly, it helps to understand exactly why it dies in an outage. Your call doesn't travel over a self-powered copper pair anymore. It travels as internet data through a little chain of equipment, and every piece in that chain runs on household power.

The chain usually goes like this: the internet enters your home at a modem (or a fiber box); the modem connects to a router that shares the internet around; and your phone plugs into a phone box or adapter that turns your voice into data. Each of those needs electricity. Cut the power and all three go dark at once, and your phone with them.

That's the key insight for backing it up: it's not enough to keep one piece alive. If the modem has power but the router doesn't, you still have no phone. The whole chain has to stay up together. Once you see it that way, the backup plan becomes obvious — keep the chain powered.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some setups combine the modem and router into one box, and some combine the phone adapter in too. Fewer boxes means fewer things to back up — but the principle is the same: whatever boxes carry your call need to stay powered.

3. The Whole Chain, Not One Piece

The mistake that undoes a backup.

I want to dwell on this because it's the single most common mistake I see. Someone buys a battery backup, plugs their phone box into it, feels safe — and then the power goes out and the phone is dead anyway. Why? Because the modem and router, upstream of the phone box, lost their power and the internet stopped.

Think of it like a garden hose with three sections. If any one section is disconnected, no water reaches the end, no matter how good the other two are. Your phone is the end of the

hose, and the modem, router, and phone box are the sections. All three have to stay connected to power for water — your call — to reach the end.

WATCH OUT

When you set up any battery backup, walk the chain with your eyes: internet-in box, router, phone box. Make sure every one of them is plugged into the battery, not just the obvious one. Miss a single link and the whole backup is wasted.

4. Option One: The Provider's Battery

The simplest set-and-forget choice.

The easiest backup for many people is the battery module that your own phone provider offers. Many cable and fiber phone services sell a battery unit designed to slot right into their equipment and keep the phone alive for a few hours when the power's out. It's made for their gear, so there's nothing to figure out.

The appeal is simplicity. You ask the provider for it, they supply the right unit, and it keeps the phone working through a typical short outage without you doing anything. When the power comes back, it recharges itself. For someone who wants a set-and-forget answer, this is often the one.

The thing to check is what exactly the battery keeps alive. Some provider batteries power the phone portion but not the internet, or they last a shorter time than you'd like. Ask how long it runs and whether it keeps the whole chain up or just the voice service.

GOOD TO KNOW

When you sign up for an internet or cable phone, ask right then whether a battery backup is included or an extra, and how many hours it gives you. It's much easier to sort out at sign-up than to chase down later.

5. Option Two: A Small UPS

One battery for the whole chain.

My favorite all-around answer for most homes is a small battery backup called a UPS — it stands for “uninterruptible power supply,” but you can just think of it as a power strip with a battery inside. You plug your modem, router, and phone box into it, and when the power goes out, the battery takes over seamlessly.

The beauty of a UPS is that it covers the whole chain from one box. One purchase keeps your internet-in box, your router, and your phone adapter all running — which means not only does your phone keep working, so does your internet, so you can still look things up or send a message during the outage. It's one of the most worthwhile small purchases a modern home can make.

A UPS sized for networking gear is modest and affordable. The bigger the battery inside, the longer it runs, so you choose based on how long an outage you want to cover. For the short outages we usually get, a small one does the job; for longer ones, step up to a larger battery.

GOOD TO KNOW

A UPS also smooths out the little power flickers and surges that wear electronics out over time, so it protects your gear even when there's no full outage. That protection alone makes many people glad they bought one.

6. How Long a UPS Lasts

Sizing it to the outage you want to cover.

The question everyone asks is: how long will a battery keep my phone alive? The honest answer is that it depends on two things — how big the battery is, and how much power your gear draws. Networking gear sips fairly little power, which is good news: it means a modest battery can run it for a useful while.

As a rough guide, a small UPS might keep a basic modem and router going for around an hour, give or take, while a larger one sized for the job can stretch to several hours. Those numbers are approximate and your real results will vary with your exact equipment, so treat them as a ballpark, not a promise.

- A smaller battery covers the short outages that are most common.
- A larger battery buys more hours for the occasional long one.
- The fewer boxes you run on it, the longer it lasts.
- A healthy, not-too-old battery lasts longer than a worn one.

TIP

If you're not sure how big to go, err on the larger side — the extra runtime is cheap insurance, and you'll be glad of it in a long storm outage. I can measure your gear's draw and recommend a size that fits your situation.

7. Option Three: A Cellular Base

A backup built right in.

A third path sidesteps the whole chain problem. A cellular home base — a little box that runs on a cell signal instead of your internet — usually comes with its own built-in battery. So it keeps working through a short power cut all by itself, with no extra equipment to buy or wire up.

This is especially appealing if you don't have reliable home internet, or if you want the fewest moving parts. There's no modem and router chain to keep alive — just the one box, with its own battery, running on the cell network. When the power's out, it rides on its battery; when there's no battery left, a charged cell phone is still your backstop.

The one requirement is a usable cell signal where the box sits, and the one limit is that the built-in battery, like any battery, only lasts so long. But for a lot of folks — particularly out in the county where internet is spotty — a cellular base with its own battery is the simplest outage-ready home phone there is.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some standalone VoIP adapters also come in a version with cellular backup and a battery built in, so the phone keeps working even if the internet or power drops. If outage coverage matters to you, ask about these when you choose a service.

8. The Charged Cell Phone Backstop

Your final, always-there way to reach 911.

No matter which backup you choose for the home phone, there's one piece I insist on for everyone: a charged cell phone, kept ready. It's the ultimate backstop. If every battery runs down, if the outage drags on for days, the cell phone is your last and most dependable way to call for help.

A cell phone doesn't depend on your home's power or your internet. It runs on its own battery and reaches the nearest cell tower, which has its own backup power. Even a simple, basic cell phone — one you keep just for emergencies — does the job. It doesn't need a fancy plan; even a phone with no active service can still dial 911 in most cases.

WATCH OUT

A backup cell phone only helps if it's charged. Keep it plugged in or top it up regularly so it's ready. A dead cell phone in a drawer is no backstop at all. Make charging it a small, steady habit.

9. Option Four: A Generator

The bigger solution for long outages.

If you live where the power goes out often and for a long time — and some stretches of the county do — a battery that lasts a few hours may not be enough. The bigger solution is a generator, which makes its own electricity and can run your whole house, including the phone's gear, for days if need be.

There are two broad kinds. A portable generator is wheeled out, fueled up, and started when you need it — cheaper, but it needs fuel on hand and some handling. A whole-home standby generator is installed permanently, usually runs on natural gas or propane, and switches on automatically when the power drops, keeping everything running with no effort from you. That convenience comes at a higher cost.

WATCH OUT

A generator is a serious piece of equipment. Never run a portable generator indoors or in a garage — the exhaust is deadly. Whole-home units should be installed by a professional. If you're considering one, treat the safety rules as non-negotiable.

10. Matching the Backup to the Outage

How long do your outages actually last?

The right backup depends on the outages you actually get. There's no sense buying a generator if your power blinks off for twenty minutes twice a year, and a small battery isn't enough if you lose power for two days every winter storm. Match the solution to your real experience.

- 1 Think back over the last few years — how long do your outages usually last?
- 2 Short flickers and brief cuts: a small UPS or the provider's battery is plenty.
- 3 Occasional multi-hour outages: a larger UPS, plus a charged cell phone.
- 4 Frequent long outages lasting many hours or days: consider a generator.
- 5 Whatever you choose, always keep the charged cell phone as the final backstop.

Most homes around here are well served by a good UPS and a charged cell phone — that combination covers the vast majority of outages we see. Step up to a generator only if your situation genuinely calls for it. Don't over-buy, and don't under-plan.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your local experience is the best guide. Neighbors on the same stretch of line usually see similar outages, so a quick chat over the fence can tell you a lot about what to plan for.

11. Setting Up a UPS, Step by Step

It's easier than it sounds.

If you go the UPS route — and for most homes I'd suggest it — here's how to set one up so it actually protects the whole phone chain. It's genuinely simple once you see it done.

- 1 Place the UPS near your internet equipment, on a shelf or the floor.
 - 2 Plug the UPS into the wall and let its internal battery charge fully first.
 - 3 Find the outlets on the UPS marked for battery backup (not just surge).
 - 4 Plug your modem, your router, and your phone box into those battery outlets.
 - 5 Unplug the wall power for a moment to test — the phone and internet should stay up.
- That test at the end is the important part — it proves the whole chain survives a cut, and it tells you roughly how long you've got before the battery runs down. Do it once when you set up, and you'll know exactly where you stand when a real outage comes.

WATCH OUT

Many UPS units have two kinds of outlets: battery-backed ones and surge-only ones. Your gear must go in the battery-backed outlets, which are usually labeled. Plug into the wrong ones and your phone still dies in an outage. Check the labels.

12. Testing Your Backup

Know it works before you need it.

A backup you've never tested is a backup you can't trust. The whole point is that it works on the worst day, so take a few minutes to prove it works on an ordinary day, when the stakes are low and you can fix anything that's off.

Testing is simple: with everything running on the UPS or the battery, pull the wall power — or just flip off the breaker to that outlet if you're comfortable doing so. Then pick up the

phone and listen for a dial tone, and make a quick test call. If the phone works, your backup works. Note roughly how long it keeps going so you know your real runtime.

TIP

Test your backup a couple of times a year — batteries weaken with age, and a battery that gave you three hours when new might give only one after a few years. A quick test catches a tired battery before a storm does.

13. When Batteries Wear Out

They don't last forever — plan for it.

Every battery, whether in a UPS, a provider module, or a cellular base, loses capacity as it ages. A backup that ran your phone for hours when it was new will run it for less as the years go by, until eventually it barely holds a charge at all. This is normal and worth planning for.

Most backup batteries last a few years before they need replacing. The signs are a backup that doesn't last as long as it used to, or a warning light on the unit telling you the battery is failing. Replacement batteries are sold for most UPS units and provider modules, and swapping one in is usually straightforward.

GOOD TO KNOW

Mark your calendar for a battery check every year or two, and note the date you installed each battery. A worn-out backup battery is one of those things that's invisible until the power goes out and the phone's dead — so a little tracking pays off.

14. Don't Forget the Internet Itself

Backup power helps only if the internet's up.

Here's a subtle point worth understanding. Keeping your gear powered through an outage keeps it ready to work — but an internet phone also needs the internet connection itself to be up. If the storm that cut your power also knocked out the internet line to your neighborhood, your powered-up gear still can't make a call.

In practice, the internet often stays up during a power outage, because the phone company's and cable company's equipment has its own backup power. But not always. This is exactly why the charged cell phone backstop matters so much — a cell phone

reaches a tower directly and doesn't depend on your home internet at all.

GOOD TO KNOW

A cellular home base sidesteps this worry nicely, since it doesn't use your home internet — it rides the cell network, which usually stays up in an outage. It's one reason a cellular base appeals to folks who worry about storms.

15. A Backup Plan for Someone Alone

Extra care when the phone is a lifeline.

If you live by yourself, the phone isn't just a convenience during an outage — it's your way to reach help, and that deserves extra care. The goal is to make sure that no matter what the weather does, you can always call for help. A layered plan is the way to get there.

- Put your phone's whole chain on a good UPS, or use a cellular base with a built-in battery.
- Keep a charged cell phone within reach as the final backstop for 911.
- If you use a medical alert, make it a cellular one that doesn't depend on the phone line, and test it monthly.
- Write your address by the phone — in a panic, it's easy to blank.
- Tell a neighbor or family member what your backup is, so they know you're covered.

None of this is meant to frighten you — it's the opposite. A few small, steady preparations mean you never have to lie awake wondering whether the phone will work in the next storm. This is the kind of layered setup I'm always glad to put together for someone on their own.

WATCH OUT

An old medical alert that dials over the phone line can fail in an outage just like the phone does. A cellular medical alert with its own battery is far safer for someone living alone. Confirm which kind you have, and test it.

16. Medical Alerts and Alarms in an Outage

They need backup power too.

Your home phone isn't the only thing that can go quiet in an outage. A medical alert base or a security and fire alarm panel that runs on your household power — and especially one that dials out over the phone line — faces the same problem. In the very storm when you'd most want them, they can be the first things to fail.

Most proper alarm panels and medical alert bases have a small built-in battery for exactly this reason, but those batteries also age and need checking. And if the device reaches help over your internet phone, it only works if that phone's whole chain is on backup power. The safest versions reach help over a cellular signal with their own battery, independent of your phone and internet entirely.

WATCH OUT

Ask your medical alert and alarm companies two things: does the device have its own battery, and how does it reach the monitoring center in an outage? If the answer depends on your phone line or internet, consider a cellular version. Test it either way.

17. A Word on Surge Protection

Protecting the gear, not just powering it.

While we're on the subject of power, it's worth a word about surges — the sudden spikes of electricity that come with storms and with power coming back on after an outage. Those spikes can quietly damage your modem, router, and phone box over time, or kill them outright in a bad lightning event.

The good news is that a UPS does double duty here — it protects against surges as well as outages, so if you've got one, your gear is already guarded. If you're not using a UPS, at least put your equipment on a good surge protector rather than straight into the wall. It's cheap insurance for equipment that isn't cheap to replace.

GOOD TO KNOW

The moment power returns after an outage can be rougher on electronics than the outage itself, because of the surge as everything switches back on. Surge protection smooths that out and is one more reason a UPS earns its place.

18. What to Do During an Outage

A calm little routine.

When the power does go out, a calm routine keeps your phone working as long as possible and makes sure you can always reach help. Here's the simple drill, assuming you've set up a backup.

- 1 Check that your phone still has a dial tone — if your backup is working, it will.
 - 2 Keep non-essential calls short to stretch the battery's runtime.
 - 3 Have your charged cell phone out and ready as the backstop.
 - 4 If the backup runs down and the phone dies, switch to the cell phone for 911.
 - 5 When power returns, let everything come back up and confirm the phone works again.
- The point isn't to ration yourself anxiously — it's just to be aware that the battery is finite, and to lean on the cell phone once it's gone. With a decent backup, most outages pass before the battery ever runs down, and you'll barely notice the difference.

TIP

Keep a flashlight and your charged cell phone in the same known spot, so when the lights go out you can find both in the dark. A little outage kit by the phone saves a lot of fumbling.

19. Common Backup Mistakes

The slip-ups that leave you without a phone.

After setting up a lot of these for folks, I see the same handful of mistakes. None are hard to avoid once you know them, and avoiding them is the difference between a backup that works and one that only seems to.

- Backing up only the phone box and forgetting the modem and router.
- Plugging gear into the surge-only outlets of a UPS instead of the battery ones.
- Never testing the backup, so a tired battery goes unnoticed until a storm.
- Letting the backup cell phone sit dead in a drawer.
- Assuming a medical alert or alarm has its own working backup when it may not.

Every one of these is avoidable with the two habits this guide keeps repeating: back up the whole chain, and test it now and then. Do those, keep a charged cell phone handy, and you've covered the ways a backup normally lets people down.

WATCH OUT

Don't assume that because a backup worked when you installed it, it still works today. Batteries fade silently. A two-minute test a couple of times a year is the only way to know you're truly covered.

20. Telling Your Family the Plan

So they know how to reach you in a storm.

A lot of the worry around outages comes from family far away who can't tell whether Mom's phone is working during a storm. A few written notes settle that worry for everyone and make it clear how to reach you when the weather turns.

- What backup the home phone has, and roughly how long it lasts.
- The cell phone number to use as the backstop if the home phone goes down.
- Whether the medical alert and alarm have their own outage backup.
- Where the charged cell phone and flashlight are kept.

When the power goes out and a worried family member two states away is trying to reach you, those few lines mean they know exactly how — and they know you're not sitting in the dark without a way to call for help. That peace of mind cuts both ways.

21. Questions About Outage Backup

Quick, plain answers.

Does my internet phone work in an outage? Not on its own — you need a battery backup on its gear, or a cellular base with its own battery.

What's the easiest fix? A small UPS with your modem, router, and phone box plugged into it — one battery covers the whole chain.

How long will it last? Usually from about an hour to several hours, depending on the battery's size and your gear. Test yours to know for sure.

What if the battery runs out? That's what the charged cell phone is for — always keep one ready as the final way to reach 911.

GOOD TO KNOW

If your question isn't here, it's probably one I've answered many times. There's no charge to ask a question over the phone — just call.

22. A Few Plain Words to Know

The jargon, translated.

Backup equipment comes with its own set of terms that don't mean much to normal people. Here's the short translation so nothing throws you.

- UPS — a power strip with a battery inside that keeps gear running in an outage.
- Modem — the box where the internet enters your home.
- Router — the box that shares the internet to your gear.
- Phone box / adapter — turns your voice into internet data for the call.
- Battery module — a provider-supplied battery made for their phone gear.
- Runtime — how long a battery keeps your gear running before it's spent.

TIP

Keep this little list with your guide. When a store clerk or a box uses one of these words, you'll know exactly what they mean and whether it's the piece you need.

23. When to Let Me Set It Up

You don't have to wire it up alone.

I wrote this guide so you'd understand outage backup and feel confident about it. But figuring out which UPS to buy, sizing it to your gear, wiring the whole chain into the right outlets, and testing it is exactly the kind of job I'm glad to do for you. I can measure your equipment's power draw and recommend a backup that fits — no guessing, no over-buying.

I come to you, here in Portage County and the nearby towns — Ravenna, Kent, Streetsboro, Aurora, Rootstown, and around Atwater. The first in-home visit is a flat ninety-nine dollars, and if something can be sorted without a trip, I offer remote help too. If you're not completely happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it.

TIP

When you call, my assistant Sophie may answer and take down the details so I can call you back — she's there so you always reach a friendly voice, not a dead end.

24. What I'd Tell My Own Neighbor

The short, honest version.

After 30+ years of professional experience helping folks keep their homes working through our Ohio storms, here's the plain advice I'd give over the fence. Your internet phone will go quiet in an outage unless you plan for it — but planning for it is easy and cheap, so just do it before the next big storm rather than during it.

Put the whole chain — modem, router, phone box — on a good UPS. Keep a charged cell phone handy as your backstop for 911. Test the backup a couple of times a year, and replace the battery when it fades. If your outages are long and frequent, think about a generator. That's the whole of it, and it buys you real peace of mind.

GOOD TO KNOW

If any of this feels like a lot, that's normal. You can hand the whole thing to me — picking the backup, sizing it, wiring it, and testing it — and I'll leave you with a phone that keeps working when the lights go out.

25. Fiber Boxes and Their Batteries

A special note if you're on fiber.

If your home has been moved to fiber, the box the technician mounted — often called an ONT — is the point where the fiber line becomes your phone and internet. That box needs power like any other, so in an outage it goes dark and takes your phone with it unless it's backed up.

Fiber providers usually offer a battery made to fit the fiber box, and it's worth asking for one at install time. Some fiber setups put the battery right in the box's enclosure; others expect you to add your own. Either way, the same whole-chain rule applies — the fiber box, the router, and the phone adapter all need to stay powered together.

TIP

At a fiber install, ask the technician directly: where does the backup battery go, how long does it last, and how will I know when to replace it? Getting those answers while the installer is standing there saves a lot of guessing later.

26. Cable and Fiber Backup Differences

Why the backup isn't one-size-fits-all.

The exact shape of your backup depends a little on what kind of service you have. A cable phone, a fiber phone, and a standalone VoIP adapter each have a slightly different chain of equipment, so the pieces you need to keep powered differ.

On a cable phone, the modem often doubles as the phone box, so you may have fewer pieces to back up. On fiber, the fiber box is the key piece, plus your router. With a standalone adapter like Ooma or Vonage, you've got the modem, the router, and the separate adapter — three pieces. The principle never changes, but the box count does, which affects how big a battery you want.

GOOD TO KNOW

Fewer boxes on the battery means the same battery lasts longer, since there's less to power. If you can simplify your setup to fewer boxes, you get more outage runtime for free — one more reason to let someone tidy the chain when it's set up.

27. A Simple Outage Kit by the Phone

Everything in one known spot.

One of the kindest things you can do for your future self is to keep a small outage kit in one known spot near the phone. When the lights go out, you don't want to be feeling around in the dark for the things you need — you want them all in one place, ready to grab.

- A charged cell phone, or a spot where it lives and charges.
- A flashlight with fresh batteries, or a rechargeable one kept topped up.
- A plain corded phone, if your setup lets one work off the battery backup.
- A card with your address and a few key phone numbers written large.
- A note of what your backup is and roughly how long it lasts.

It takes ten minutes to put together and it sits quietly in a drawer for years. But on the night a storm knocks the power out, that little kit turns a stressful scramble into a calm, handled

moment. That's exactly what you want from a backup plan.

TIP

Keep the kit in the same drawer or shelf where you keep this guide. One known spot for everything outage-related means anyone in the house — or a visiting helper — can find what they need in the dark.

28. Charging Habits That Keep You Ready

A backstop only works if it's charged.

The best backup plan in the world fails if the batteries aren't charged when the moment comes. Building a few small habits means your backups are always ready, without you ever having to think hard about it.

Keep your backstop cell phone either plugged in or topped up on a regular schedule — once a week is plenty for a phone you rarely use. Leave your UPS plugged into the wall at all times so its battery stays full and ready. Set each cordless handset back on its cradle after every call. None of these take effort once they're habit; they just quietly keep you covered.

WATCH OUT

A backup cell phone that's been sitting dead in a drawer for months is the most common failure point of all. Pick a day — say, the first of the month — to check and top it up. A charged phone is the whole point.

29. Backup for a Traveling Phone

Snowbirds and second homes.

If you take a VoIP adapter or a cellular base with you to a winter place, remember that your backup plan has to travel too. The outlet in the Florida condo is just as prone to a storm outage as the one at home, so the same whole-chain thinking applies wherever you plug in.

Bring your UPS if you're moving an internet phone, or rely on the built-in battery of a cellular base. And keep that charged cell phone with you as always — it's the one backstop that works anywhere there's a signal. Don't assume a backup you set up at home protects you at the second place unless you bring it along.

WATCH OUT

Whenever you move a traveling phone box, update its 911 registered address to where you actually are. A backup keeps the phone alive, but it's the registered address that sends help to the right place. Both matter — don't do one and forget the other.

30. Questions to Ask Your Provider

Get the answers before the storm.

Your phone provider can answer most of the backup questions that matter, but only if you ask — they rarely volunteer it. Here are the plain questions to put to them when you sign up or whenever you call.

- Does my phone work during a power outage, and for how long on its own?
- Do you offer a battery backup for my equipment, and is it included or extra?
- Does your battery keep the internet up too, or only the phone?
- Does my phone need the internet connection up, or only power?
- How will I know when the backup battery needs replacing?

Write down their answers. Providers and plans differ, and what's true for your neighbor on a different service may not be true for you. A few minutes of asking gives you a clear picture of exactly what you've got and what you still need to add.

GOOD TO KNOW

If a provider can't give you clear answers about outage behavior, that itself tells you something — it means you should plan your own backup rather than count on theirs. When in doubt, a UPS and a charged cell phone cover you regardless.

31. Portable Power Stations

A flexible middle ground.

Between a small UPS and a full generator sits another option worth knowing about: a portable power station. These are large rechargeable batteries in a box with ordinary outlets on the front. You charge one up and keep it ready, and in an outage you plug your phone gear — or a lamp, or a fan — straight into it.

A bigger one can run your modem, router, and phone box for many hours, well beyond what a small UPS manages, and it doubles as backup power for other small needs during a long outage. Unlike a generator, it makes no fumes and no noise, so it's safe to use

indoors. The trade-off is that you have to remember to keep it charged, and it switches over by hand rather than automatically.

GOOD TO KNOW

A portable power station is a nice fit for someone who wants more runtime than a small UPS but isn't ready for a permanent generator. Keep it charged, and label which outlets your phone gear should go into so there's no fumbling in an outage.

32. Putting the Options Side by Side

Which backup fits which home.

With several options on the table, it helps to see which one tends to fit which situation. There's no single best — the right choice depends on your internet, your outages, and how much you want to spend and fuss with.

- Short, rare outages and you want simple: the provider's battery module.
- You want your phone and internet both up, from one box: a small UPS.
- Spotty or no home internet: a cellular base with its own battery.
- You want hours of runtime with no fumes: a portable power station.
- Long, frequent outages and you're home a lot: a whole-home generator.

Most homes land on a UPS plus a charged cell phone, and that's a sound, affordable choice that covers the great majority of outages. Step up from there only if your particular situation calls for it. The chart in this guide lays the runtimes out side by side if you want to compare at a glance.

WATCH OUT

Don't let the choices paralyze you. If you do just two things — put the chain on a UPS and keep a charged cell phone ready — you're better prepared than most homes in the county. Start there; you can always add more later.

33. The Bottom Line

One trade-off, easily solved.

So here's where this leaves you. The newer internet-based phone has one real weakness compared to the old copper line: it needs power and internet, so it goes quiet in an outage on its own. But that weakness is not a dealbreaker — it's a solved problem, and an affordable one at that.

Back up the whole chain with a small battery, keep a charged cell phone as your final backstop, test it now and then, and step up to a generator only if your outages truly call for it. Do that, and your modern phone will ring through the storms just as dependably as the old one did — and you'll have your internet along with it. That's the one trade-off of the switch, handled. You can rest easy.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

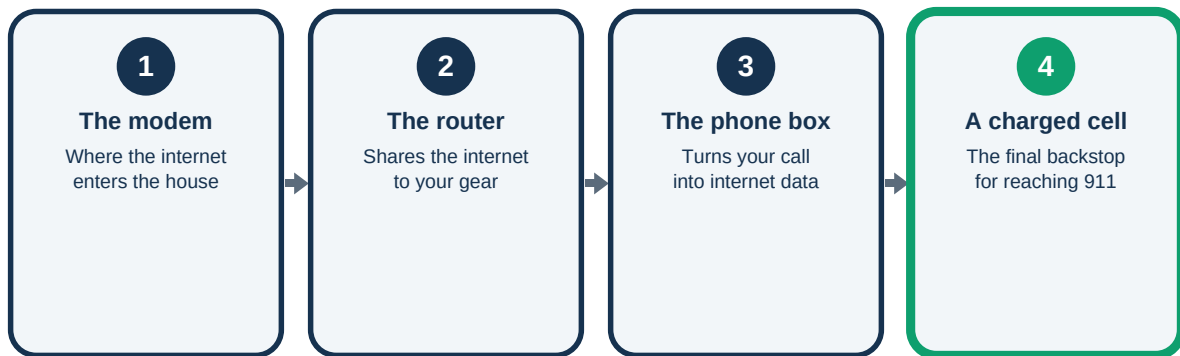
Keep this by the phone. I want to... Do this. Keep my phone working in an outage — put the WHOLE chain (modem, router, phone box) on a battery backup, not just one piece. Use the easiest fix — a small UPS with all your gear plugged into its battery-backed outlets. Handle a no-internet home — use a cellular base with its own built-in battery. Cover long, frequent outages — consider a whole-home generator, installed safely. Always have a backstop — keep a charged cell phone ready; it's the final way to reach 911. Know it works — test the backup a couple of times a year and replace tired batteries. Get help — call Bill: (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

What to Put on Battery

The whole chain has to stay powered



If any link loses power, the phone goes quiet — back up the whole chain.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Your Backup Options

Roughly how long each keeps the phone alive

	How long	Good for
Provider battery module	A few hours	Set-and-forget
Small UPS on the gear	Hours; depends on size	Phone + internet
Cellular base w/ battery	Hours on its own	No-internet homes
Whole-home generator	Days	Frequent long outages
Charged cell phone	Its own battery	The 911 backstop

Confirm runtimes with your own gear — real times vary. No single best.

BEFORE YOU GO

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 results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

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