BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2378

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Set Up Fall Detection & Who It Calls

Turn it on, choose who gets called, and test it safely — so the safety net is really there

Plain-English smartwatch help from:

Bill's Home Tech

Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Fall detection notices a hard fall, taps your wrist, and shows an alert you can cancel with “I'm OK.” If you don't respond and stay still for about a minute, it counts down and then calls emergency services, after which it messages your emergency contacts with your location. Turn it on in the watch's companion app (Apple: Watch app Emergency SOS; Pixel/Samsung: the safety section), keep Wrist Detection on, and add your contacts and Medical ID in the phone's Health app.

Test it safely by holding the SOS button to see the countdown and then cancelling before it dials — never fake a fall. It is excellent for hard falls and can miss soft ones, so treat it as a backstop worn snug on the wrist, and let me set it up and confirm the whole chain works if any of it is unclear.

- Wrist tap and alarm first — it only auto-calls if you can't respond.
- Contacts and Medical ID live in the phone's Health app.
- Must be worn, snug, charged, and able to reach a signal.
- Test by cancelling the countdown — never let it dial 911 by mistake.

1 The Short Version

Fall detection is the feature most families actually want a watch for. Set up correctly, the watch can notice a hard fall, give you a chance to say “I'm fine,” and — if you cannot answer — call emergency services and tell your chosen people where you are. It is a quiet safety net that asks nothing of you on an ordinary day.

This guide gets it set up properly: turned on, your emergency contacts in place, and tested once so you know exactly what happens. The whole point is that you only find out it works on the one day you need it — so we make sure, calmly, in advance.

- A hard fall triggers a wrist tap, an alarm, and an on-screen alert you can cancel.
- If you do not respond and seem unmoving, the watch counts down and then calls emergency services for you.

- After that call, it messages your emergency contacts with your location.
- For automatic calling to work, the watch must be worn on the wrist and able to reach a signal.

> **TIP**
> The two things that make fall detection actually useful are turning it on and filling in your emergency contacts. A watch with no contacts can still call 911 for you, but it cannot tell your daughter where you are. We will do both.

2 What Actually Happens When You Fall

It helps to picture the sequence before you ever need it, so there are no surprises. On an Apple Watch, for example, a detected hard fall taps your wrist, sounds an alarm, and shows an alert. If you are fine, you dismiss it. If you do not respond and stay still for about a minute, it begins a countdown with louder alerts, and when the countdown ends it places the emergency call for you.

1. The watch feels a hard impact and a specific motion that looks like a fall.
2. It taps your wrist, sounds an alarm, and shows an alert with an emergency slider.
3. If you are okay, you tap “I'm OK” (or press to dismiss) and nothing else happens.
4. If you stay unmoving for about a minute, a 30-second countdown begins with escalating alerts.
5. When the countdown ends, the watch calls emergency services and then messages your contacts with your location.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> The design is deliberately cautious. It gives you every chance to cancel a false alarm, and it only calls on its own if you truly cannot respond. That is why a watch that bumps a table does not dial 911 — it waits to see if you answer.

3 Which Watches Have It

Fall detection is common on current watches, but not universal, and the details differ by brand. It is worth knowing what you actually have before you rely on it.

Watch	Fall detection in 2026
Apple Watch (recent models)	Yes — built in, with automatic emergency calling and contact alerts
Google Pixel Watch	Yes — fall detection plus Emergency SOS and contact sharing on recent models
Samsung Galaxy Watch	Yes — hard-fall detection with SOS on recent models
Fitbit-branded bands/watches	Generally no built-in fall detection or emergency SOS

WATCH OUT

Features and model requirements change, and some depend on a cellular plan or your phone being nearby. If you are buying a watch specifically for fall detection, confirm the exact model does what you need — that is a smart thing to check with me before you spend the money.

4 Before You Start: What You'll Need

A few minutes of gathering makes the setup smooth. Have these ready and the rest is quick.

- The watch, charged, and the phone it is paired with.
- The names and phone numbers of the people you want alerted in an emergency.
- Your basic health details for the Medical ID (any conditions, allergies, medicines).
- A few quiet minutes — and a willingness to do one real test at the end.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your emergency contacts live in the phone's Medical ID, and fall detection uses that same list. So filling in Medical ID does double duty: it feeds fall detection and it shows first responders your key health facts.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

5 Turn On Fall Detection (Apple Watch)

On an Apple Watch the switch lives in the Watch app on the paired iPhone, under the Emergency SOS section. Many people are surprised to learn it may already be on for them.

1. On the iPhone, open the Watch app, then tap Emergency SOS.
2. Find Fall Detection and switch it on.
3. Choose “Always on” if you want it during everyday life, not only workouts.
4. Make sure Wrist Detection is on (also in the Watch app) — automatic calling needs it.

GOOD TO KNOW

On Apple Watch, fall detection is turned on automatically if your Health profile says you are 55 or older; younger wearers can switch it on themselves. If you set the watch up for a parent, double-check their age is entered correctly, or the feature may be off when you expect it on.

6 Turn On Fall Detection (Pixel & Samsung)

Android watches put the setting in their own companion app, and the wording varies, but the idea is identical: find the safety section and switch fall detection on, then confirm Emergency SOS and your contacts.

1. Pixel Watch: open the companion app on the phone, find Safety & emergency (or the watch's Personal Safety settings), and turn on fall/emergency detection.
2. Samsung Galaxy Watch: open the Galaxy Wearable app, look under Safety and emergency / SOS, and enable hard-fall detection.
3. In both, add your emergency contacts and confirm location sharing is allowed.
4. Check whether the feature needs the phone nearby or a cellular plan on the watch.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Some Android watches have changed what works without a paired phone or a cellular plan. If your watch is a Wi-Fi-only model, understand that away from home and the phone, its emergency calling may be limited. When in doubt, test it in a realistic spot — or ask me to confirm your exact setup.

7 Set Your Emergency Contacts

This is the step that turns a 911 call into a call that also reaches your family. Choose people who are likely to answer and able to act — and let them know you have listed them.

1. On the phone, open the Health app and go to your Medical ID (or the equivalent emergency settings).
2. Add two or three emergency contacts with their correct phone numbers.
3. Pick people who usually answer and live reasonably close, plus one backup.
4. Save, and send each of them a quick heads-up that they are on your list.

WATCH OUT

Tell your contacts what the automatic message will look like, so an unexpected "your parent's watch detected a fall" text does not frighten them into thinking it is a scam. A thirty-second conversation now prevents a panicked one later.

8 Fill In the Medical ID

Responders can see your Medical ID from a locked watch or phone, which is enormously helpful when you cannot speak for yourself. It takes five minutes and can matter more than any other setting here.

- List major conditions (heart, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.).
- List drug allergies and critical medicines.
- Add your blood type if you know it, and your date of birth.
- Turn on "Show when locked" so responders can actually see it.

GOOD TO KNOW

There is a dedicated guide in this library on putting a Medical ID on your wrist if you want the full walkthrough. For fall detection, the essentials are your conditions, allergies, and emergency contacts.

9 Test It Safely — Without Faking a Fall

You should never throw yourself down to test this. You do not need to. There are gentle ways to confirm the whole chain works, and doing it once removes all the doubt.

1. Test the manual Emergency SOS: on Apple Watch, hold the side button until the sliders appear (then cancel before it dials) to confirm the countdown and contacts are set.
2. Check the dry-run message: your emergency contacts should be the ones listed in Medical ID — open it and read the list aloud together.

3. Confirm Wrist Detection is on and the watch fits snugly, since a loose watch on a table cannot detect anything.
4. If you want a true end-to-end test, do it by prior arrangement with a contact so no one is alarmed — or let me run the check with you.

WATCH OUT

Do NOT let a real countdown finish by accident during testing, or the watch will actually call 911. Always cancel the slider before it completes. If it ever does dial by mistake, stay on the line and tell the dispatcher it was a false alarm — do not just hang up.

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10 Avoiding False Alarms

Fall detection occasionally mistakes a hard, sudden motion for a fall — slapping a railing, a big golf swing, dropping heavily into a chair. This is rare, harmless, and easy to handle: you simply tap “I'm OK.” Knowing it can happen means you will not be rattled when it does.

- A false alert always gives you the chance to cancel — it never dials instantly.
- If false alarms happen a lot during a specific activity, you can choose “workouts only” or adjust it.
- Never ignore the alert hoping it stops; tap “I'm OK” so it does not count down.

GOOD TO KNOW

A few false alarms are the price of a feature that errs on the side of getting you help. For most people they happen rarely, if ever, and the reassurance is well worth the occasional tap.

11 What It Can't Do — Being Honest

A safety net works best when you know its edges. Fall detection is excellent at hard, high-impact falls, and less reliable for a slow slide to the floor or a gentle crumple. It is a wonderful extra layer, not a guarantee.

- It can miss a soft or slow fall that does not create a sharp impact.
- It needs to be worn on the wrist and snug — it does nothing sitting on a nightstand.
- Automatic calling needs a signal: cellular, Wi-Fi calling, or (on some models) satellite.
- It is one layer of safety, best paired with regular check-ins and a tidy, trip-free home.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> For someone at real risk of falling, I often suggest pairing the watch with one or two other simple safeguards — a check-in routine, better lighting, grab bars. The watch is the backstop, not the whole plan, and I am glad to help think the whole plan through.

12 For a Parent or Spouse You Care About

If you are setting this up for someone else, the kindest approach is to make it invisible to them day to day and reassuring to you. They should not have to manage anything; it should just quietly watch over them.

1. Set it up on their watch with YOUR number as an emergency contact (and a sibling as backup).
2. Enter their correct age so age-based defaults switch on.
3. Fill in their Medical ID with their real conditions and medicines.
4. Show them, gently, the “I'm OK” button so a false alarm does not worry them.

TIP

Keep it simple for them and detailed for you. Your parent only needs to know “if I fall and can't get up, it gets help, and if it buzzes by mistake I just tap I'm OK.” You handle the settings; they just wear it.

13 Keep It Ready: Charging and Wear Habits

A safety feature only works on a charged, worn watch, so the habit around it matters as much as the setting. The goal is a watch that is almost always on the wrist and almost never dead.

- Pick a daily charging window that does not leave the watch off during active hours — many people charge while getting ready or during a morning coffee.
- Wear it snug; a loose watch cannot detect a fall reliably.
- Keep Wrist Detection on so automatic calling can work.
- Glance at the battery as part of the morning routine.

GOOD TO KNOW

There is a full battery-and-charging guide in this library with habits that keep a watch alive all day. For a safety watch, the only rule that really matters is: on the wrist when you are up and about.

14 When to Call Bill

Fall detection is one of those features that is simple once it is set up and genuinely confusing before. The settings are scattered, the wording differs by brand, and getting the emergency contacts truly working is the part people most often get half-right.

I set it up properly in one visit: turn it on, enter the Medical ID and contacts, confirm the emergency chain actually works, and show you (or your parent) the one button that matters. You walk away knowing — not hoping — that the safety net is really

there.

- You want it set up and tested so you know for certain it works.
- You are configuring it for a parent and want it right the first time.
- You are not sure your model supports it, or whether it needs a cellular plan.
- The emergency contacts or Medical ID will not save, or the test did not behave as expected.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Set it up once, test it safely, then forget it until you need it.

I want to…	Do this…
Turn it on (Apple)	iPhone Watch app Emergency SOS Fall Detection on; keep Wrist Detection on
Turn it on (Pixel/Samsung)	Companion app Safety & emergency enable fall/SOS; allow location
Set who gets called	Phone's Health app Medical ID add 2–3 emergency contacts, tell them
Help responders	Fill in Medical ID (conditions, allergies, meds); show when locked
Test it safely	Hold the SOS button to see the countdown, then CANCEL before it dials
Set up for a parent	Enter their real age, use your number as contact, show them the “I'm OK” tap
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

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

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

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.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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