



An Extended Guide · No. 1450

Keeping the Essentials On in an Outage

Phones, internet, lights, and
the fridge — kept going, quietly

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

Free & printable — share it with someone who needs it



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

✓ The best news first — this one is safe indoors

Here is the best news about a solar generator, and the reason it earns a place in your home: despite the word 'generator,' it has no engine. At its heart is a big rechargeable battery in a case — a power station — and the panels simply refill it from the sun. 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 the power station part 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. (The panels sit outside in the sun; the station stays indoors where it is dry.) A few simple habits keep it that way: charge it with the gear 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. In an outage, that safety is the whole point — you keep your phone, a light, and the fridge going from a machine sitting right in the room with you, with no trip out into the storm.

Keeping the important things on when the power's out

When the lights go out, you don't need to run the whole house — you need the handful of things that keep you safe, fed, and connected. This guide walks through exactly what to keep on with a solar generator, in what order, and how to make it last, all in plain English.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30-plus years of helping folks through outages, I've learned that the ones who do best aren't the ones with the biggest machine — they're the ones who decided ahead of time what truly matters, and kept just those things going.

So that's what we'll do together here: name your essentials, put them in a sensible order, and make a small plan you can lean on when the power quits. Nothing to memorize, and nothing you can't do.

★ Let's make your plan together

I don't sell solar generators and I earn no commission, so this is just honest advice. If you'd like help deciding what to keep on and how to set it up, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — the conversation's free.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you already know how to keep the essentials going through an outage.

- ❑ Keep the essentials on — phones and the internet, a light or two, any medical device, and the fridge in turns — not the whole house.
- ❑ It's battery-based and safe indoors, so it runs right beside you: no going out in the storm, no fumes, quiet enough for the bedroom overnight.
- ❑ Put things in order: safety and medical first, then keeping food cold, then comfort. Run the important things and skip the hungry heat-makers.
- ❑ Keep the fridge and freezer doors closed and run them in turns; food stays safe a good while when the doors stay shut.
- ❑ Let the sun refill it by day so you go into each night as full as possible, and turn off whatever you're not using.
- ❑ Make a written must-run list ahead of time and keep it with the unit — and remember it won't run a 240-volt well pump.

✓ One line to hold onto

Run the few things that keep you safe and connected, keep the fridge closed, and let the sun top you up by day — do that and a solar generator carries you through an outage in comfort.

What counts as an essential

Start by deciding what truly needs to stay on. For most homes the list is shorter than you'd think, and a solar generator handles it beautifully.

- **A way to call for help:** your phone kept charged, and a cell phone or landline you can reach in a hurry. This comes first, always.
- **The internet box:** the router and modem, so your Wi-Fi, your phone calls over it, and any medical alert button keep working.
- **A light or two:** a lamp or a couple of LED lights so you can move around safely after dark.
- **Any small medical device:** a CPAP, an oxygen concentrator, a way to keep medicine cool — whatever your health depends on.
- **The refrigerator and freezer:** run in turns, with the doors kept closed, to keep the food from spoiling.

After those, anything else is comfort — a fan on a hot night, a small radio or TV for the news, a way to make a hot drink. Lovely to have if there's room, but only once the important things are covered.

✓ Short list, big comfort

You're not trying to power your whole life — just the handful of things that keep you safe, connected, and fed. Keep the list short and a modest unit goes a long way.

The best part: it runs right beside you

This is where a solar generator truly shines in an outage. Because it's a battery and not an engine, it stays in the room with you.

A gas generator has to live outdoors and well away from the house, because its engine gives off carbon monoxide — an invisible, deadly gas. That means going out into the storm to start it, running long cords back inside, and never being able to use it in the room where you actually are.

A solar generator asks none of that. The station sits on your kitchen counter, beside your chair, or on the nightstand, running quietly all night. In an outage that changes everything: your essentials stay at arm's reach, you never step outside in bad weather, and you can sleep in the same room as it working.

! Give it a little air and keep it dry

Indoor-safe doesn't mean careless. Set the station where it has a little air around it — not buried under a blanket or shut in a tight cabinet — keep it away from water, and use the charger it came with. Do that and it's as safe as any appliance in the house.

First things first: put your essentials in order

A battery only holds so much, so the secret is spending it on what matters most, in order. Here's the order I teach.

- **1. Safety and medical, always first.** A charged phone, a way to call for help, and any device your health depends on come before everything else.
- **2. Keeping food cold.** Next, protect what's in the fridge and freezer by running them in turns — more on that in a moment.
- **3. Comfort, last.** A fan, a light in another room, the radio for news — good to have once the first two are handled.

The other half of the trick is skipping the hungry heat-makers. Anything that makes heat — a space heater, a hair dryer, a coffee maker, a microwave, a toaster — gulps power fast and can drain a battery in no time. Save the generator for the steady, gentle things, and reach for other ways to warm up or cook. Our what-it-won't-run guide goes deeper on the heavy, power-hungry loads.

! The heat-makers are the battery's enemy

The quickest way to run a battery flat is to plug in something that makes heat. A space heater or a hair dryer can empty in a hurry what would otherwise power your essentials for hours. When it makes heat, find another way.

Keeping your food cold and safe

The fridge and freezer worry people most in an outage, but the rules are simpler than you'd think — and mostly about keeping the doors shut.

The single most important habit is to keep the doors closed. A closed fridge or freezer holds its cold for a good while on its own, so every time you peek inside you let that cold escape. Decide what you want before you open it, get in and out quickly, and the food takes care of itself far longer than most folks expect.

You don't need to run the generator on the fridge nonstop, either. The smarter way is to chill it down, then move the power to something else, and come back to it now and then to cool it again. Running it in turns like that stretches your battery a long way while keeping the food safe.

If kept closed	It stays safe
The refrigerator	About 4 hours
A full freezer	About 48 hours
A half-full freezer	About 24 hours

! When in doubt, throw it out

Those closed-door times are the USDA's general guidance, not a promise for every kitchen. If food has warmed up, sat out, or you're simply not sure it's still cold enough, don't risk it — when in doubt, throw it out.

Keeping the internet — and your phone — alive

In a modern home, that little internet box does more than you'd guess. Keeping it powered is one of the smartest things you can do.

Your router and modem — the boxes that bring in the internet and spread the Wi-Fi around the house — sip only a little power, but they punch well above their weight. With them running, your cell phone can make calls and texts over Wi-Fi even when the cell signal is weak, your medical alert button keeps working, and you can look up news, reach family, or check on the outage.

So even though they're easy to forget, the router and modem earn a spot near the top of the list. They ask for very little and give back a great deal: your whole connection to the outside world, in two small boxes.

✓ Small boxes, big payoff

The router and modem cost almost nothing to run and keep you connected to everyone who matters. Plug them in early and leave them on — it's some of the best use of a battery there is.

Making every bit of power last

A few easy habits stretch a battery surprisingly far. None of them are hard — they just become second nature after a day.

- ❑ Use LED lights, not old-style bulbs — they sip power and give the same brightness for a tiny fraction of the drain.
- ❑ Turn off and unplug whatever you're not actually using; every little bit adds up over a long outage.
- ❑ Charge your phones and any device batteries during the sunny hours, while the panels are refilling the station.
- ❑ Light one room at a time instead of the whole house — move the lamp with you as you go.
- ❑ Keep the hungry heat-makers unplugged, and run the fridge in turns rather than nonstop.

✓ A gentle draw goes a long way

The lighter you sip, the longer the battery lasts. Small, steady things — lights, phones, the router — can run a good long while, so spend your power on those and a solar generator stretches further than you'd think.

Let the sun refill it by day

Here's the piece that sets a solar generator apart in a long outage: when the sun's up, you can put power back in for free.

The routine is simple. In the morning, set the panels out in the sun and run their cable to the station. Through the bright hours they refill the battery while you draw from it, so on a good day you can nearly keep pace with your essentials — or even gain ground. The goal is to go into each night with as full a battery as the day allowed.

Solar comes on the sun's terms, though, not yours: a gray day gives you far less than a clear one, and at night the panels rest. So refill hard while you can, and don't wait until the battery's near empty to start. Our sun-and-weather guide sets honest expectations for how much you'll really get, and how to make the most of the sky you have.

✓ Harvest by day, spend by night

Treat daylight as your chance to gather power for the night ahead. Fill up while the sun's out, ease your draw when it isn't, and the sun does a real share of the work for you.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

What keeping the essentials on looks like depends a lot on where you live. In town it's mostly about staying connected and protecting the food; out in the country, water comes into it too.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, in the suburbs, or in an apartment, outages tend to be short and the power's usually back within hours. Your water keeps flowing from the city main no matter what, so keeping the essentials on is really about staying connected, keeping a light on, and looking after the food.

- A modest solar generator easily covers phones, the internet, a lamp, and a medical device through a typical outage.
- Keep the fridge closed and run it in turns; for a short outage the food is rarely in any danger at all.
- Being indoor-safe and silent matters most here — no fumes, no noise for close neighbors, safe overnight.
- For most short outages a full battery holds you over, with the panels a nice bonus if it drags on.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, outages run longer and there's an extra worry: when the power quits, the well pump quits too — so the water stops. No water for drinking, cooking, flushing, or animals. A solar generator is a valuable part of the plan here, but it can't be the whole plan.

- Store drinking water ahead of time — jugs in the pantry, a few filled containers — because the tap may go dry.
- The well pump is almost always 240-volt, and that stays a gas generator's job; a portable solar unit won't run it.
- Where the solar generator earns its keep is the quiet indoor essentials — lights, phones, the internet, a medical device.
- On a long outage, the sun can refill it day after day — power the dead wall can't give you — while a gas unit handles the pump.

★ Not sure which fits you?

Tell me whether you're on city water or a well, and how long your outages usually run, and I'll help you sort out exactly what to keep on — and what still needs a gas generator. Call (330) 200-8042.

Make your must-run list now

The best time to decide what to keep on isn't in the dark during a storm — it's now, at the kitchen table, with a pen.

Walk through your home room by room and jot down the handful of things you'd truly want running in an outage: the phone charger, the router, a lamp, the CPAP, the fridge. Put them in order — safety and medical at the top — and you've just made the plan that carries you through. It takes a few minutes and saves a world of second-guessing later.

- ☐ I've listed the things I truly need to keep running.
- ☐ I've put them in order, with safety and medical first.
- ☐ I've noted which are gentle (lights, phones, the router) and which are hungry (anything that makes heat).
- ☐ I've written it on a card and kept it with the unit, where I'll find it in the dark.

★ Send me your list

That little must-run list is the whole ballgame. Jot down what you'd want running and text me a photo, and I'll help you figure out roughly what size solar generator suits it — no guessing, no overbuying. (330) 200-8042.

If someone at home depends on a device

When a solar generator is part of caring for a medical need, it deserves special thought — and one honest caution.

A solar generator is wonderful for a small medical device: it's quiet, it's safe right in the bedroom, and it can keep something like a CPAP or an oxygen concentrator going through the night. If someone in your home relies on one, that device belongs at the very top of your must-run list, above everything else.

But a battery is only one layer of a good plan, never the whole of it. Batteries run down, a cloudy stretch can slow your refills, and any equipment can fail. So keep the device's own batteries charged, keep backup oxygen tanks on hand if that's your situation, and know how you'd reach help fast if the power stays off longer than expected.

! A battery is one layer, not the whole plan

If a life depends on a device, don't let a solar generator be your only safeguard. Talk with your doctor or equipment supplier about a full backup plan, keep spare batteries and tanks ready, and tell your utility you have a medical need. Our medical-equipment guide walks through all of this in depth.

What an outage day looks like

Put it all together and a day on a solar generator has an easy, reassuring rhythm. Here's how one tends to go.

When the power first quits, you don't scramble — you reach for your list. You get the router and your phone going, switch a lamp over to the station as evening comes, and give the fridge a good chill before easing off it. The panic most folks feel in an outage comes from not knowing what to do; a plan takes that away.

Through the day, if the sun's out, the panels refill the battery while you sip power for the essentials. As night falls, you lean on the stored battery — a light where you are, phones topped up, the router humming, a medical device running quietly by the bed. Come morning, you set the panels out again and top back up.

✓ A plan beats a scramble

The calm in an outage comes from deciding ahead of time. With your list made and your habits set, an outage becomes a quiet evening rather than an emergency.

When the outage drags on for days

A short outage is easy. A long one asks a little more care — and this is exactly where solar earns its place.

On a multi-day outage, the sun becomes your lifeline: each clear day refills the battery so you can spend it again that night, over and over, in a way a wall charge never could when the grid is dead. So the first rule is to refill every bright hour you get, and never let the battery coast all the way down to empty.

The second rule is to ration a little. Tighten up to the true essentials, run the fridge in shorter turns, light just the room you're in, and save the comfort items for when you know the sun's coming. Stretched this way, a solar generator can carry the important things through a surprisingly long stretch.

✓ Refill every bright hour

The homes that ride out a long outage best are the ones that top up every sunny hour and spend carefully after dark. Let the sun do the heavy lifting and you can go a good long while.

Where to set it up

Placing the station well makes it both handier and safer. A minute's thought here pays off all outage long.

Keep the station indoors, in a dry spot where you spend your time — the kitchen, the living room, the bedroom at night. Set it where you can see its little screen and reach its outlets without hunting in the dark, and give it a bit of open air so it doesn't overheat. If you're using the panels, run just their cable out to the sun and keep the station itself inside where it's dry.

A few small touches help: a flashlight or headlamp kept right on top of it, a short power strip so you can plug in more than one thing at once, and a clear path to it that won't trip you at night. Little things, but they make the whole outage smoother.

! Keep the station dry

Water and electricity don't mix. Never let the station sit in rain, on wet ground, or where a leak could reach it, and never run a cable through standing water. The panels can take a sprinkle outside; the station stays indoors, dry and sheltered.

A little comfort, once the essentials are covered

Once the important things are handled, a solar generator can add real comfort to an outage — just keep comfort in its place, which is last.

- **A small fan** on a hot, still night — a genuine mercy, and it sips only a little power.
- **A radio or small TV** for the news about when the power's coming back, and for a bit of company.
- **A phone or tablet** for music, a book, or a movie to pass a long evening.
- **Warmth the gentle way:** blankets and layers, not an electric blanket or space heater that would drain the battery fast.

The one rule is order: comfort comes only after safety, medical needs, and the food are all taken care of. Keep the heat-makers unplugged and enjoy the quiet, gentle comforts instead.

✓ Comfort is the reward, not the plan

Enjoy the fan and the radio — that's part of what makes a solar generator such a kind sort of backup. Just cover the essentials first, and keep the heat-makers off it.

A few easy mistakes to sidestep

Most outage letdowns come from a handful of avoidable slip-ups. Now you'll see them coming.

- **Opening the fridge too often.** Every peek lets the cold out; decide first, open fast, and close it right back.
- **Plugging in the heat-makers.** A space heater, hair dryer, or coffee maker drains a battery in a hurry — keep them off it.
- **Waiting until it's near empty to refill.** Set the panels out early and top up all day; don't let it coast to nothing.
- **Forgetting the router.** It sips little and keeps you connected — an easy one to overlook and really miss.
- **Having no list.** Deciding what to run in the dark, in a panic, is the hardest way; make the list now instead.

! The costly one: food you're unsure of

The mistake that really costs is guessing about food. If the fridge has been warm too long, or you simply aren't sure, don't gamble with someone's stomach — when in doubt, throw it out.

A simple outage checklist

Keep this by the unit. Run down it when the power quits and you'll have the essentials handled in minutes.

- ☐ Get your phone and the router on first, so you can call for help and stay connected.
- ☐ Switch your lights over to the station as it gets dark — one room at a time.
- ☐ Chill the fridge and freezer, then run them in turns with the doors kept closed.
- ☐ Power any medical device, and check its own backup batteries or tanks.
- ☐ If the sun's out, set the panels out and start refilling right away.
- ☐ Turn off and unplug whatever you're not using, and keep the heat-makers off it.

★ Want this on your fridge?

Tell me your must-runs and I'll help you turn them into a simple, printed checklist you can tape inside a cabinet — so anyone at home can follow it, even if you're not there. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Getting ready before the storm

The work that makes an outage easy happens before it ever starts. A little readiness goes a long way.

Keep the station topped up from the wall so it's full when you need it, and know where your panels, cables, and a flashlight are before the lights go out. Fill a few jugs of drinking water if you're on a well, charge your phone and device batteries when a storm's in the forecast, and make sure your must-run list is where you'll find it in the dark.

Keeping the essentials on is really one piece of a bigger readiness plan — water, food, warmth, medicine, and a way to reach help. Our storm-readiness guide pulls the whole picture together; this guide is just the power part of it, done well.

✓ A full battery is a ready battery

The simplest readiness habit of all: keep it charged. A solar generator that's topped up and easy to reach is worth far more than a bigger one you have to go hunting for in the dark.

Where to go from here

Keeping the essentials on is the heart of it. When you're ready, the rest of this series fills in each piece, one calm topic at a time.

If you want to understand the solar side — how much power the sun really gives, and when — our sun-and-weather guide sets honest expectations. If someone at home has a medical need, our medical-equipment guide goes deep on a safe backup plan. And to know what a solar generator can't run, our what-it-won't-run guide lays out the heavy loads plainly.

For the whole picture — water, food, warmth, and more — our storm-readiness guide ties it all together. There's no need to read them all at once; pick the question on your mind today and come back to the rest whenever you need them.

✓ One question at a time

You don't have to become an expert. Learn just enough for today's decision, and lean on the guides — or on me — for the rest whenever you're ready.

Common Questions

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

Q: What should I keep running first in an outage?

Safety and medical needs, always — a charged phone, a way to call for help, and any device your health depends on. After that, keep food cold, and save comfort like a fan for last. Run the important things and skip anything that makes heat.

Q: How long will my food stay safe?

If you keep the doors closed, the USDA says a fridge holds food safely about 4 hours, a full freezer about 48 hours, and a half-full freezer about 24. Run the fridge in turns to stretch it, and when in doubt, throw it out.

Q: Can I really run it in the bedroom overnight?

Yes — that's one of its best features. It's a battery, not an engine, so there's no exhaust and no carbon monoxide. Give it a little air, keep it dry, and it's safe to run right beside you while you sleep.

Q: What shouldn't I plug into it?

Anything that makes heat — a space heater, hair dryer, coffee maker, toaster, or microwave — gulps power and can drain the battery fast. Save it for the gentle, steady things. Our what-it-won't-run guide has the full picture.

Q: Will it keep my well pump running?

No. A well pump is almost always 240-volt, and that's beyond a portable solar generator. Store drinking water ahead of an outage, and keep a gas generator for the pump — the solar unit handles your quiet indoor essentials.

★ 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 in an outage 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

The Essentials Worth Keeping On

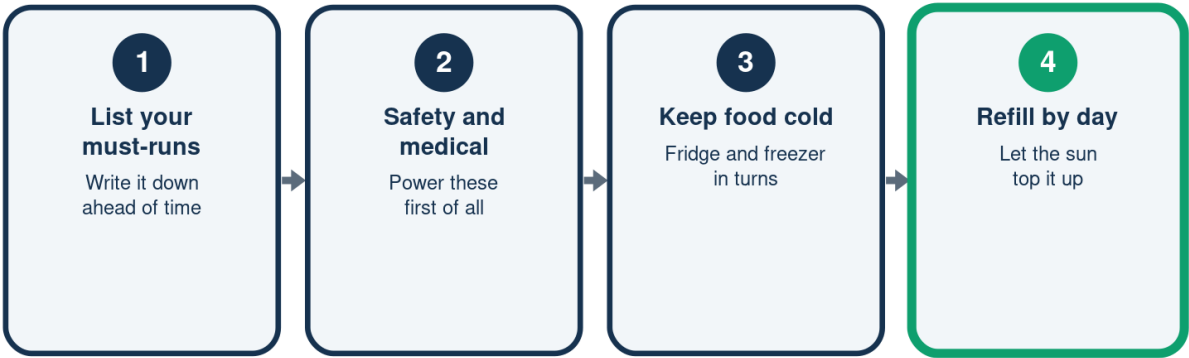
A short list beats the whole house

	What to run	Why it matters
Phones, router	Stay connected	Call for help
A light or two	LED lamps	See at night
A medical device	Small devices	Health first
Fridge in turns	Run off and on	Food stays safe

Run the few things that keep you safe, connected, and fed.

Keeping the Essentials On

Four steps, in order



Safety and medical first, then food, then comfort.

Keeping Food Cold and Safe

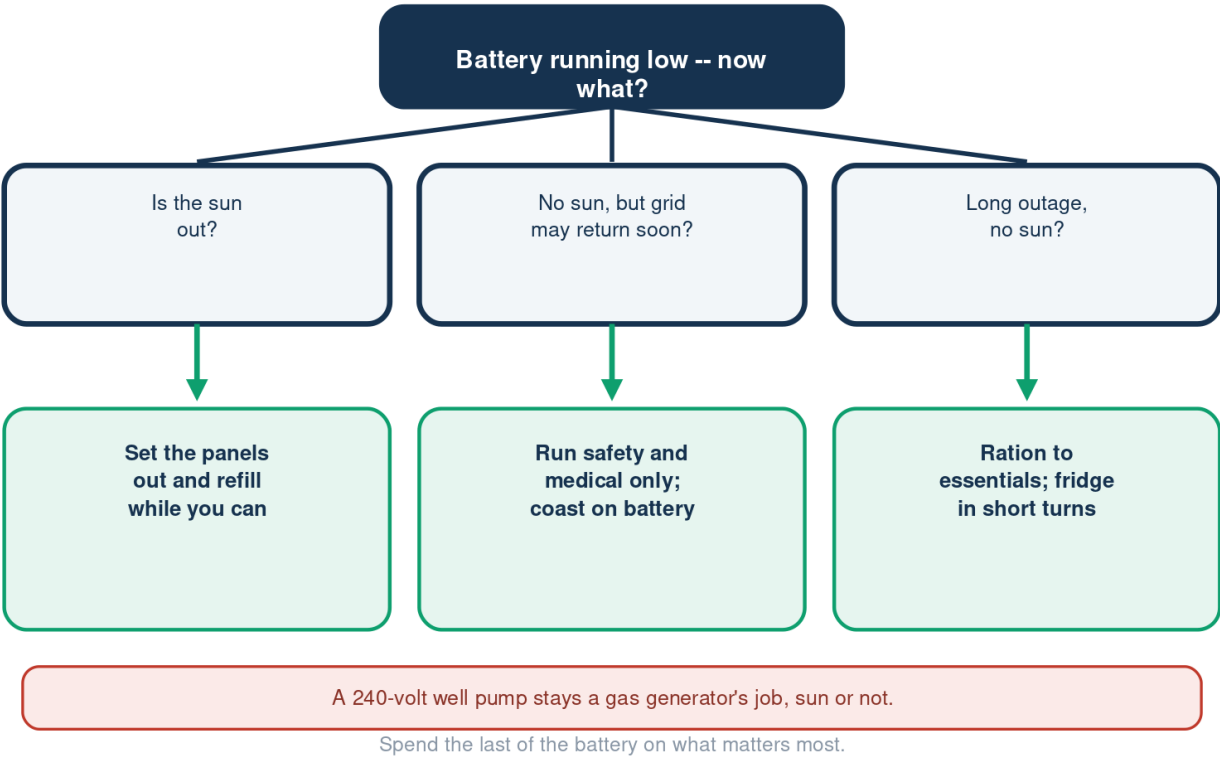
Doors closed, run in turns

	Fridge	Full freezer
Keep it	Closed	Closed
Stays safe	About 4 hours	About 48 hours
When to run it	Now and then	Less often
If in doubt	Throw it out	Throw it out

USDA closed-door guidance -- a full freezer holds longest.

When the Battery Runs Low

Let the sky and the grid guide you





Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will
make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness,
no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



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*



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

Use of these guides is subject to our Terms of Use (billshometech.com/terms-of-use).

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

For general information only — not professional advice. Use at your own risk. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech