



An Extended Guide · No. 1315

Choosing Your Installer

Getting honest quotes
and the right pro

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! Read this first — carbon monoxide is still the real danger

A standby generator runs on an engine, and engine exhaust contains carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill. Your installer sets the unit outdoors and spaces it away from windows, doors, and vents to meet the maker's instructions and local code, which is a big part of what keeps you safe. Your job is to keep it that way: never let anyone box it in, build a structure around it, or let snow, leaves, or drifts pile up against it, and never move it closer to the house. Put battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on every floor and outside the bedrooms, and test them — the safety agencies urge this for every home. If an alarm sounds, or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone into fresh air first and ask questions later. One quiet reason to insist on a licensed, experienced installer is that placing the unit at the safe, code-required distances is a big part of keeping this gas away from your home.

Let's find you the right pro, not just the lowest bid

A standby generator is only as good as the people who install it. The unit gets most of the attention, but the installer — their license, their care, and what's in their quote — is what determines whether you end up with a system that's safe, legal, and dependable for years.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks make good decisions about the equipment in their homes, patiently and in plain language. Think of this guide as me at your kitchen table, helping you tell a solid installer from a shaky one before you sign anything.

We won't talk dollar figures here — that's a whole guide of its own. We'll talk about how to vet a pro, what a complete quote should spell out, the questions that reveal a good one, and the red flags that tell you to keep looking.

★ I'll help you vet the quotes

This is right in my lane. I don't sell generators and I earn no commission, so I've got no reason to steer you anywhere but the right pro. Send me your quotes and I'll help you read them and line up trusted local installers. Call or text (330) 200-8042 — free.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you're most of the way to a good, safe install.

- ❑ Use a licensed, insured, experienced installer — and, where you can, one that's factory-authorized or certified.
- ❑ Factory authorization often matters for keeping the manufacturer's warranty valid.
- ❑ Get more than one quote, and make each an itemized one that covers the whole job — not just the machine.
- ❑ Check references and reviews, and ask to see recent local installs.
- ❑ Confirm who pulls the permit and who handles the gas connection and any utility coordination.
- ❑ Ask about service plans and how fast they respond after the sale — the relationship doesn't end at install day.

✓ The one-sentence version

The best install comes from a licensed, authorized pro whose itemized quote covers everything, who pulls the permit, checks out with references, and stands behind the work — and price is only one piece of that.

Why the installer matters as much as the machine

It's tempting to shop for a standby the way you'd shop for an appliance — pick a unit, find the cheapest price. This is different.

A standby generator is a permanent piece of equipment tied into your electrical panel and your fuel supply. Getting that right takes real skill: a proper load calculation, code-compliant wiring and the transfer switch, a safe gas connection, correct placement, a permit, and a clean startup. The same unit can be a joy or a headache depending entirely on who put it in.

So the pro you choose isn't a detail — it's the decision. A great installer makes the machine disappear into the background of your life, working quietly for years. A careless one can leave you with a system that's unsafe, that fails inspection, or that lets you down on the one night you need it.

✓ Shop the pro first, the unit second

A trustworthy installer will help you choose the right unit for your home. Chasing the cheapest machine and hoping to find someone to install it is backwards — start with the pro.

Licensed, insured, and experienced

These three words are the floor, not the ceiling — but never go below the floor.

The electrical work and the gas connection on a standby install legally require licensed trades. Ask directly who holds the electrical license and who handles the gas, and don't be shy — a reputable outfit answers plainly and can show proof. You want them insured, too, so that if something goes wrong on your property, their coverage handles it, not you.

Experience with standby generators specifically matters, not just general handyman work. Putting one in safely means knowing load calculations, transfer switches, fuel supply, and local code. Ask how many standby units they install in a year, and how long they've been doing it.

! Unlicensed work is a genuine hazard

An unlicensed electrical or gas connection isn't just against code — it can be dangerous, it can fail inspection, and it can void your warranty and tangle your insurance. If someone offers to skip the licensing to save you money, that's your cue to walk away.

Factory-authorized, and your warranty

Beyond a license, many makers train and certify installers — and that can matter more than folks realize.

A factory-authorized or certified installer has been trained on the brand they're putting in, which usually means a cleaner install and someone who knows that unit inside and out. Just as important, manufacturers often require a professional — sometimes specifically an authorized — install to keep the warranty valid. A do-it-yourself or unauthorized job can quietly void the coverage you're paying for.

So it's a fair question to ask up front: are you authorized for the unit you're recommending, and does this install keep the full manufacturer warranty in force? Get the answer in writing if you can.

✓ Warranties have their own guide

What the warranty covers, for how long, and what keeps it valid is worth its own read — and it varies by maker, so I won't quote you years here. Our warranties-and-service guide walks through it.

Get more than one itemized quote

A single number on a page tells you almost nothing. An itemized quote tells you the whole story — and lets you compare fairly.

Ask each installer for a written, itemized quote, and get more than one. A complete standby install has a lot of moving parts, and you want to see each of them spelled out so you know exactly what you're buying and can line the quotes up side by side.

- The generator unit itself, and the automatic transfer switch.
- The electrical work — wiring, any panel changes — by the licensed electrician.
- The gas or propane connection by the licensed gas pro.
- The pad the unit sits on, and site preparation.
- The permit and inspection fees.
- Startup and commissioning, plus your orientation on how to use it.
- The warranty, and any service plan or maintenance included.

✓ Same scope, or you're not comparing

Make sure every installer is quoting the same job — the same coverage and the same inclusions — or the numbers aren't really comparable. A cheaper quote that leaves things out isn't cheaper; it's incomplete.

What a complete quote should make clear

Beyond the line items, a good quote answers the questions that tend to cause surprises later.

Look for it to state, in plain terms, what's included and what isn't. Does the price cover the permit, or is that extra? Is the pad included? Who arranges the inspection? If your electrical panel needs updating to handle the install, is that in the quote or a separate charge you'll meet later?

A thorough installer will also note the unit they're recommending and why, tied to a load calculation for your home — not just a size pulled from your square footage. Vague quotes hide surprises; clear ones prevent them. When something isn't spelled out, ask until it is.

✓ Get it in writing

Handshake promises have a way of evaporating. If an installer tells you something is included, ask to see it on the written quote. A good pro is happy to put it in ink.

Checking references and reviews

The best predictor of how your install will go is how other folks' installs went. It's worth a little digging.

Ask for references — recent, local, and ideally for jobs like yours — and actually call one or two. Ask whether the work was clean, whether it passed inspection, whether the crew showed up when they said, and how the installer handled anything that went sideways. Look up online reviews too, and read the middling ones, not just the glowing and the furious.

Pay special attention to what people say about service after the sale. Anyone can be pleasant while chasing a signature; you want the outfit that still answers the phone a year later when the unit needs a checkup or throws a fault.

★ I keep an eye on local reputations

One advantage of a local helper is that I hear how these installs actually turn out around here. If you tell me who you're considering, I'm glad to share what I know — honestly. Call (330) 200-8042.

Who pulls the permit, handles gas, and calls the utility

These three tasks have to happen, and you want to know exactly who owns each one before work begins.

A proper standby install almost always needs a permit and an inspection, and often coordination with your gas supply and your electric utility. A good installer pulls the permit themselves and folds all of this into the job. Ask plainly: do you pull the permit, or is that on me? Who makes the gas connection? Do you notify the utility if that's needed?

If an installer wants you to pull your own permit, or suggests skipping it, treat that as a warning. Pulling the permit is part of standing behind the work, and the inspection is there to confirm the job was done safely and to code — it protects you, not them.

! The permit is not optional paperwork

Skipping the permit and inspection risks unsafe work, trouble with your insurance and warranty, and problems if you ever sell the home. Our permits-and-inspections guide explains why it matters — and it's a non-negotiable, not a place to save a few dollars.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Vetting an installer looks a little different in a close-in neighborhood than it does out on a rural property — the fundamentals are the same, but a few priorities shift.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, you'll often have several installers to choose from, so you can compare quotes more easily — and your gas is likely already at the house, which keeps the fuel side simpler.

- More installers nearby usually means it's easier to gather two or three itemized quotes to compare.
- Ask specifically about your neighborhood association's rules and any town setbacks — a good installer knows the local ones.
- With natural gas likely present, confirm the installer verifies your line and meter can feed the unit.
- Tighter lots make placement and noise worth raising early, so it's on the quote, not a surprise.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, there may be fewer installers to choose from, and the job often involves propane and a well pump — so experience with rural setups matters, and your water depends on getting it right.

- Ask whether they've sized standby units for a well pump before — that 240-volt load is often the deciding one, and experience shows.
- With propane instead of a gas main, confirm who coordinates the tank and who makes the connection.
- Longer gas and electrical runs on a big lot can affect the quote — make sure they're accounted for, not glossed over.
- Fewer local installers makes references and reviews even more worth chasing down before you commit.

★ Town or country, I'll help you weigh them

Whether you've got five quotes or are struggling to find two, tell me what you're working with and I'll help you compare them and spot who's worth trusting with your home. Call (330) 200-8042.

Service plans and response time after the sale

Install day is the beginning of the relationship, not the end. How an installer treats you afterward matters for years.

A standby generator needs routine care to stay ready — oil and filter changes, a healthy battery, periodic checkups — so ask whether the installer offers a service or maintenance plan, and what it covers. Many owners are glad to hand that tracking to their installer rather than keep it on a calendar themselves.

Just as important is what happens when the unit faults or won't start for its test. Ask how fast they respond to a service call, whether they answer after hours, and whether they stock parts for the units they sell. The best time to learn all this is before you sign, not during your first outage.

✓ Maintenance has its own guide

What that routine care actually involves — and the weekly self-test that keeps the unit ready — is covered in our maintenance guide, so you'll know what a good service plan should include.

Red flags to walk away from

Most installers are honest pros. But a few warning signs mean you should thank them and keep looking, no matter how friendly the pitch.

- **No license, or dodging the question.** The electrical and gas work require licensed trades. Vagueness here is disqualifying.
- **Wanting to skip the permit or inspection.** That's not a shortcut; it's a hazard and a liability that lands on you.
- **Cash-only, or a big deposit up front.** Reasonable deposits happen; cash-only and heavy prepayment are warning signs.
- **High-pressure sales.** 'This price is only good today' is a tactic, not a deal. A good pro gives you room to think.
- **A vague, one-line quote.** If they won't itemize the job, you can't see what you're buying — or what they're leaving out.
- **No references, or reviews they wave off.** A solid installer is proud to show you recent work.

! Pressure is the biggest tell

Any push to decide right now, before you've compared quotes or checked references, is reason to slow down, not speed up. Real professionals expect you to shop around, and they respect it.

Why the lowest bid can cost you the most

It's natural to lean toward the smallest number. Let me gently talk you through why that can backfire on a job like this.

A bid comes in low for a reason. Sometimes it's honest efficiency. But often it's because something was left out — the permit, the pad, a panel upgrade, a proper transfer switch — or because corners will be cut on the install or the parts. Those savings have a way of reappearing later as change orders, failed inspections, or a unit that doesn't hold up.

The goal isn't the cheapest price; it's the best value — a complete, code-compliant, well-installed system from a pro who'll stand behind it. Sometimes that is the lower bid, and sometimes the middle one is the wiser money. What matters is comparing complete quotes, not chasing a number.

! A missing line isn't a saving

If one quote is far below the others, don't assume you found a bargain — assume something's missing, and find out what. Nine times out of ten, the gap is a line item the others included and this one didn't.

Comparing quotes apples-to-apples

Once you've got a few itemized quotes in hand, here's how to line them up so the comparison is honest.

Put the quotes side by side and check that each one covers the same scope — the same coverage for your home, the same inclusions, the same unit family. Where one is missing a line the others have, note it, and ask that installer whether it's truly not needed or simply not listed. Only once the scopes match are the numbers really comparable.

Then weigh more than the bottom line: the installer's licensing and authorization, their references, what's included after the sale, and how they treated you while quoting. The right choice balances all of that — price is one factor, not the only one.

✓ The money side has its own guide

What actually drives a standby's price — and why quotes vary — is covered in full in our cost-and-value guide. It pairs with this one: that guide explains the numbers, this one helps you judge the people behind them.

How I help you vet, plainly

This is genuinely one of my favorite ways to help, because a little guidance here saves folks real money and real headaches.

- **I read the quotes with you:** I'll go through each itemized quote, explain what every line means, and flag anything missing or unclear.
- **I help you compare fairly:** I'll line the quotes up against each other so you're comparing the same job, not apples to oranges.
- **I line up trusted local pros:** I know reputable licensed installers in the area and can point you toward ones I'd use myself.
- **I'm a second set of ears:** if a pitch feels pushy or a quote feels off, run it by me before you sign — that's exactly what I'm here for.

★ No commission, no dog in the fight

I don't sell generators and I take nothing from any installer, so my only interest is you getting a fair deal from a good pro. Send me your quotes and let's go through them. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

A simple vetting checklist

Work through these for each installer before you commit. If one can't clear the list, that's your answer.

- ☐ They're licensed for the electrical and gas work, insured, and experienced with standby generators.
- ☐ They're factory-authorized or certified for the unit, and the install keeps the warranty valid.
- ☐ Their quote is written and itemized, covering unit, transfer switch, electrical, gas, pad, permit, startup, and warranty.
- ☐ They pull the permit and handle the gas connection and any utility coordination.
- ☐ They gave me references I actually checked, and their reviews hold up.
- ☐ They offer a service plan and told me their response time after the sale.

✓ Bring this list to every quote

Ask the same questions of everyone and the right installer tends to stand out on their own. If you'd rather have a hand working through it, that's a call I'm always glad to take.

After you choose: what to expect

Once you've picked your pro, a good installer makes the rest feel orderly. Here's the shape of it, in brief.

Expect a site visit and a load calculation, then a schedule and the permit. On install day — or over a few days, depending on the job — the crew sets the pad and the unit, the licensed electrician wires the transfer switch and panel, and the licensed gas pro makes the fuel connection. Then comes inspection, a startup and test, and your orientation on how it all works.

A good installer keeps you informed at each step and doesn't leave until you understand your own system. If anything about the sequence is unclear when they're quoting you, ask them to walk you through it — knowing what's coming makes the whole thing calmer.

✓ The install has its own guide

The full step-by-step of install day — who does what, and in what order — is covered in our installation-process guide, so you'll know exactly what a good crew looks like in action.

Common mistakes people make

A handful of avoidable slips account for most of the regret I hear about when a standby install goes wrong.

- **Getting only one quote.** With no comparison, you can't tell a fair price and scope from a padded or a hollow one.
- **Choosing on price alone.** The bottom line matters, but licensing, references, and what's included matter more.
- **Skipping the reference calls.** Ten minutes on the phone with a past customer tells you more than any brochure.
- **Not confirming who pulls the permit.** Assume nothing; get it in writing so no one 'forgets.'
- **Forgetting about service after the sale.** The cheapest install is no bargain if no one answers when it faults.

! Slow down at the signature

Almost every one of these mistakes comes from rushing. Give yourself permission to take a week, gather quotes, and check references. A standby is a long-term investment — it can wait for a good decision.

What I do, and what I leave to the pros

Worth saying plainly, because it's the honest shape of how I can help you choose.

- **What I help with:** reading and comparing your quotes, explaining the line items, sharing what I know about local installers, and lining up licensed pros I trust.
- **What only licensed pros do:** the load calculation, the electrical work and transfer switch, the gas connection, and pulling the permit.
- **What I never do:** the licensed install work itself — that's not my license, and your safety deserves the real thing.

★ Call before you sign, not after

The best time to reach me is while the quotes are still on the table. A little help choosing up front beats untangling a bad install later. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Questions to ask every installer

Ask these of each pro you're considering. The answers — and how readily they come — tell you a great deal.

Q: Are you licensed and insured, and who does the electrical and gas work?

You want clear names and licenses, not a shrug. A reputable installer answers this plainly and can show proof.

Q: Are you factory-authorized, and does this install keep my warranty valid?

Authorization often protects your warranty. Get the answer in writing, and see our warranties guide for what to confirm.

Q: Can I have an itemized quote and a couple of recent local references?

A willing yes is a good sign; reluctance is a red flag. Actually call the references and ask how the job went.

Q: Who pulls the permit, and do you offer a service plan afterward?

The installer should pull the permit and stand behind the work. Ask about response time and maintenance before you sign.

✓ There's no silly question

If an installer makes you feel rushed or foolish for asking, that's a reason to keep looking, not to sign. A good pro welcomes plain questions.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks trying to choose an installer, answered plainly.

Q: How many quotes should I get?

At least two, and three is better. More than one lets you compare scope and price fairly, and it's the single best protection against overpaying or missing something important.

Q: Does it have to be a factory-authorized installer?

It's strongly worth preferring one, because authorization often keeps your warranty valid and usually means a cleaner install. Ask each installer directly, and confirm the warranty stays in force.

Q: The cheapest quote is way lower than the others. Should I take it?

Be careful. A far-lower quote usually means something's left out — the permit, the pad, a panel upgrade — or corners will be cut. Find out what's missing before you decide.

Q: Can I pull the permit myself to save money?

It's much better to have the installer pull it — that's part of standing behind the work. An installer who wants you to pull your own permit, or to skip it, is waving a red flag.

Q: Will you help me choose between installers?

Gladly — it's one of my favorite things to do. Send me your itemized quotes and I'll help you read them, compare them fairly, and point you toward local pros I trust. I earn nothing from any of them.

★ Still deciding? That's what I'm here for

Choosing the right installer before you spend is exactly the kind of thing I love to help with, with nothing to sell you. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and let's go through your quotes together.

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 choosing a standby generator installer feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't do the licensed electrical or gas work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Good Signs vs. Red Flags

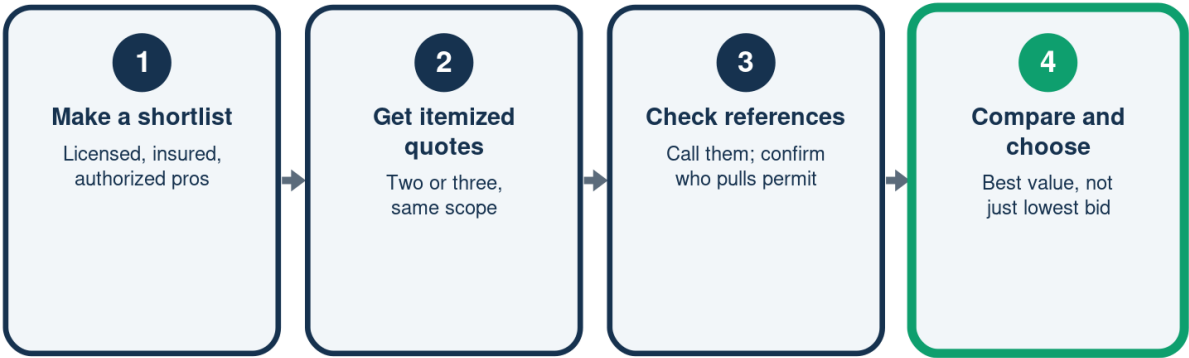
What to look for, and what to walk from

	Good sign	Red flag
Licensing	Licensed, insured	Dodges it
The quote	Itemized, clear	Vague, cash-only
The permit	They pull it	Skip it
References	Glad to share	None to give
Sales style	Patient	Pressures you

Any push to sign today is a reason to slow down, not speed up.

From Shortlist to Signed

The calm order that lands you a good pro



Price is one factor — licensing, references, and service matter too.

Complete Quote vs. Bare-Bones

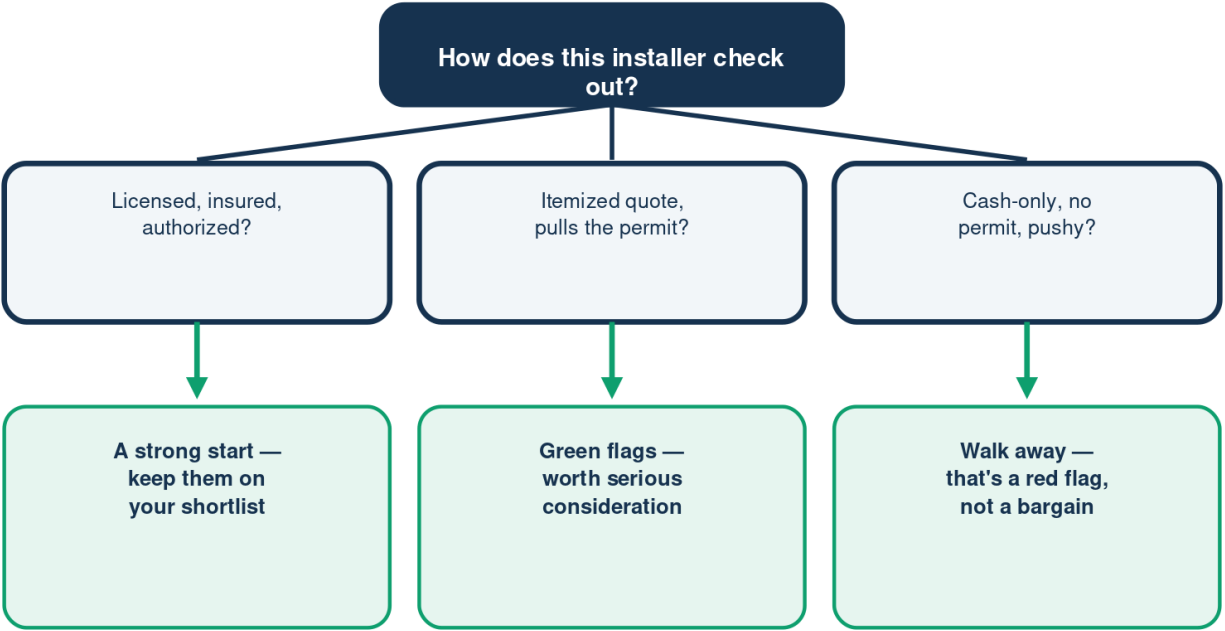
Why itemizing protects you

	Complete quote	Bare-bones
Unit and switch	Both listed	Just the unit
Electrical, gas	Spelled out	Extra later
Pad and permit	Included	Not mentioned
Startup, service	Covered	Silent
Warranty	Explained	Vague

A cheaper quote that leaves things out isn't cheaper — it's incomplete.

Is This the Right Installer?

Let their answers point the way



No license or no permit is a deal-breaker, not a discount.

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



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.

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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*



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