



An Extended Guide · No. 1304

Cold-Weather Readiness

Keeping your standby
dependable all winter

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

! 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. Winter adds just one job to your list — after a storm, clear snow and ice away from the unit and its vents, because a buried exhaust can push those fumes back where they don't belong.

Let's get your standby ready for winter

A whole-home standby generator is built to live outside and run all year — but an Ohio winter asks a few small things of it, and of you, to stay dependable when the storms roll in.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. Between lake-effect snow and the ice storms that take power out for days, winter is exactly when a standby earns its keep. The good news is that yours is designed for the cold; a little readiness is all it takes.

I won't throw temperatures or numbers at you — what matters isn't a thermometer reading, it's a handful of habits: keep it serviced before winter, keep snow off it, and keep its vents and exhaust clear. This guide walks through all of it, plainly and in order.

★ Don't wait for the first storm to wonder

The worst time to find out your standby needs attention is in the middle of a January outage. If you'd like me to help you get it winter-ready before the snow flies, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you only remember a handful of things about your standby in winter, make it these.

- ❑ A standby is built to run outdoors year-round — it lives outside by design, snow and all.
- ❑ Cold makes any engine harder to start, so cold-weather kits like a battery warmer or oil warmer help it fire up reliably.
- ❑ Your installer fits the right cold-weather accessories for your unit and climate — it isn't something you add yourself.
- ❑ After every storm, clear snow and ice off the unit and away from its vents and exhaust — a blocked exhaust is a carbon-monoxide danger.
- ❑ On propane, extreme cold reduces how well the fuel vaporizes, so tank sizing and placement matter — the gas pro handles that.
- ❑ Get it serviced and the battery checked before winter, not during the outage.

✓ The one-sentence version

Keep it serviced before the cold, keep snow off it and its vents clear, and let the pros handle the cold-weather kit and the fuel — and your standby will carry you through winter.

It's built to live outside, all year

Let's start with the reassuring part, because folks often worry their generator will struggle in the snow.

A whole-home standby generator is designed from the ground up to sit outdoors in every season, in a weatherproof housing, ready every hour of every day. Winter is not a problem it wasn't built for — it's exactly the weather it was made to work through.

In fact, winter is when many outages happen, so your standby is meant to shine precisely when the ice storms hit. Your job isn't to protect it from the cold; it's to keep the snow from piling up and to make sure it's been cared for before the season.

✓ **Never bring it inside to 'warm it up'**

Because it's built to run outside, there's never a reason — and never a safe way — to move a standby, or run any generator, in a garage or enclosed space. It stays outdoors, exactly where the pros installed it, winter included.

What the cold actually changes

Winter doesn't stop a standby — it just makes a few things a little harder, and it helps to know which.

Cold thickens the oil, so the engine turns over more slowly. A cold battery holds less starting punch, right when the engine wants the most help. And if you're on propane, bitter cold can make the fuel vaporize less freely. None of this means the unit is failing — it's ordinary winter physics.

The good news

These are exactly the things a proper cold-weather setup and a little fall maintenance are meant to handle. Once it starts and warms up, your standby runs in January just as steadily as it does in July.

✓ This is why readiness matters

Everything winter makes harder — starting, the battery, the fuel — is something you get ahead of before the season, not during a storm. That's what the rest of this guide is about.

Cold-weather kits: a little help starting

In a cold climate like ours, most standby units can be fitted with accessories that keep them starting reliably through the deep freeze.

These cold-weather kits are simple helpers built for the job. A battery warmer or blanket keeps the battery strong when it's frigid; an oil warmer keeps the oil thin enough to turn over easily. Together they take most of the struggle out of a cold start.

- **A battery warmer or blanket:** keeps the starting battery from losing its punch in the cold.
- **An oil warmer:** keeps the oil from thickening so the engine turns over easily.
- **Other accessories:** some units offer additional cold-weather helpers your installer can recommend.

★ Let the installer fit the right ones

Which cold-weather accessories your unit needs depends on the model and our climate — so this is the installer's call, not a do-it-yourself add-on. If you're not sure yours has what it needs, I can help you ask the right questions. Call (330) 200-8042.

The battery is the winter weak spot

If a standby is going to hesitate in the cold, the battery is usually why — so it's worth a little extra attention before winter.

Every battery, in a generator or a car, holds less usable power when it's cold. And the starting battery is already a wear item and a common failure point in any season. Put those together, and a tired battery is the most likely thing to let you down on a frigid night.

- Have the battery's health checked as part of a fall service visit.
- If it's older or weak, replace it before winter rather than during an outage.
- A battery warmer, fitted by your installer, helps it hold its strength in the cold.
- Let the weekly self-test do its job — it keeps the battery charged and ready.

✓ Upkeep lives in the maintenance guide

Checking and replacing the battery is part of routine care. Our maintenance guide covers the whole upkeep rhythm — this page is just the cold-weather piece of it.

Keep snow and ice off the unit

The single most useful winter habit is also the simplest: don't let snow and ice pile up on or around your standby.

A standby needs to breathe — to draw in air and let its exhaust out — and it needs room around it for both airflow and service. Deep snow, drifts, and ice can smother that, so a walk out to clear it after each storm is time well spent.

- Brush snow off the top and sides of the unit after a storm.
- Keep the area around it clear — don't let drifts build up against it.
- When you shovel or plow, aim the snow away from the unit, never toward it.
- Watch for ice from roof runoff or downspouts building up around it.

! Don't pile snow against it

It's easy to forget the generator when you're clearing a driveway, but a unit buried in plowed or drifted snow can't breathe and can't vent safely. Give it the same clear space in winter that it has the rest of the year.

The exhaust and vents — the safety one

This is the most important page in the guide, so please read it slowly. It's where snow stops being a nuisance and becomes a danger.

Your standby's engine gives off exhaust that contains carbon monoxide — the invisible, odorless gas we covered on page one. The unit is placed and vented to send those fumes safely away. But if snow or ice blocks the exhaust or the vents, those fumes can collect around the unit and even work back toward the house.

After a storm	What to do
Snow drifting against the unit	Clear it away from all sides
Exhaust outlet buried or iced over	Gently clear it so it's fully open
Vents packed with snow	Brush them clear before it runs long
A big drift you can't easily reach	Clear a safe path so you can

! A snow-blocked exhaust is a carbon-monoxide danger

Clearing snow and ice from the exhaust and vents isn't housekeeping — it's safety. Do it first, before you worry about anything else, and keep tested battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms inside your home. If an alarm sounds or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone to fresh air first.

Propane in the deep cold

If your standby runs on propane, the cold asks one more thing — though it's the gas pro's job, not yours, to handle it.

Propane has to turn from liquid to gas — to vaporize — before the engine can burn it, and in extreme cold that happens less freely. For a standby running hard through a long, frigid outage, that means the size of the tank and where it sits actually matter to keeping fuel flowing.

This is exactly why a licensed gas pro sizes and places your tank for our climate. It's not something to eyeball or adjust yourself; the pro accounts for cold-weather vaporization when the system goes in.

✓ The fuel choice is its own guide

Whether natural gas or propane is right for your home — and all the cold-weather trade-offs — is covered in our natural-gas-versus-propane guide. This page is just the winter reminder that on propane, tank sizing and placement earn their keep.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Winter tests both kinds of homes, but out in the country the snow runs deeper and the stakes — especially water — run higher.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, your standby mostly guards food, heat, and comfort through a winter outage, and clearing snow off it is usually a quick trip out the back door.

- A quick walk out to brush off the unit after each storm is usually all the snow duty you'll have.
- City water keeps flowing, so winter readiness is about heat, food, and staying comfortable.
- On a smaller lot, mind where plowed snow gets piled so it doesn't end up against the unit.
- Natural gas is often already at the house, so there's no tank to think about in the cold.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, drifting snow piles deeper and lingers longer, outages run for days, and when the power's out the well pump is out too — so winter readiness is really about keeping water and heat going.

- Drifting and deep snow mean checking and clearing the unit more often through a long storm.
- The well pump means no power is no water, so a dependable winter start is truly essential.
- On propane, keep the tank clear and topped up, and lean on the gas pro's sizing for the cold.
- A long, snowed-in lane can delay a service call — all the more reason to get it ready in the fall.

★ Let's winter-proof your setup

Tell me whether you're in town or out on a well, and how your winters usually go, and I'll help you get your standby — and your winter habits — ready before the first storm. Call (330) 200-8042.

Get it serviced before the cold sets in

The best winter readiness happens in the fall, before you need the generator at all.

Ahead of the season is the time to have the routine maintenance done — oil and filters, a battery check, a general once-over — and to confirm any cold-weather kit is in place and working. Finding a problem in October is a simple fix; finding it during a January outage is an emergency.

- ❑ Routine service done on the maker's schedule, before the season's first hard freeze.
- ❑ Battery checked, and replaced if it's weak or aging.
- ❑ Cold-weather accessories fitted and confirmed working by the installer.
- ❑ The area around the unit cleared, with room to reach it once the snow comes.
- ❑ Carbon-monoxide alarms tested, with fresh batteries.

★ A fall check-up beats a winter surprise

If you keep a service plan, this is part of what it's for. If you don't, I'm glad to help you line up a fall visit with a pro — and make sure nothing's overlooked. Call (330) 200-8042.

The weekly self-test keeps working in winter

Your standby runs a brief self-test on a schedule all year — and in winter that little exercise is quietly doing you a favor.

On its regular schedule — commonly once a week — the unit starts itself, runs for a few minutes, and shuts down. This keeps the engine limber and, importantly for winter, keeps the battery charged and ready. You'll hear it; that's normal and a good sign.

If you ever notice the weekly test didn't run, or the unit signals a fault, don't ignore it heading into a storm — that's your early warning to get it looked at while the weather's still fine.

✓ Let the app tell you

Most modern standby units can report the weekly test result to your phone. Our monitoring guide explains how to set that up — a handy way to know your generator is winter-ready without trudging out to check.

When the power goes out in a storm

Here's the reassuring part: during a winter outage, your standby does the work. Your role is small.

The moment the power fails, the transfer switch starts the generator and switches your home over automatically — heat, fridge, water on a well, and your other chosen circuits come back, usually within seconds. You don't go out in the storm to start anything.

- Let it do its job — it starts, runs, and switches back on its own.
- As snow keeps falling, walk out and clear it off, keeping the exhaust and vents open.
- On propane, keep an eye on the tank level for a long outage, and plan a refill if needed.
- Never touch, cover, or enclose the running unit — just keep the snow off it.

✓ The storm playbook is its own guide

Before, during, and after an outage has a fuller game plan of its own. Our storm-readiness guide walks through it — this page is the cold-weather slice.

Snow, drifting, and where it sits

Where your standby sits shapes how much snow trouble you'll have — and that spot was chosen with winter in mind.

Your installer picks the location to meet the maker's and code's clearances, but also with practical things like roof runoff, downspouts, and how snow tends to drift on your property. A good spot keeps the unit out of the worst of the drifting and easy to reach in the snow.

That placement isn't something to change on your own — the clearances and the gas and electrical connections are fixed, licensed work. But it does help to know how snow behaves around your unit so you can keep the right areas clear.

✓ Placement has its own guide

How a unit's spot is chosen — clearances, drainage, snow, and service access — is covered fully in our placement-and-pad guide. This page is just the winter angle on why the spot matters.

A few winter myths, cleared up

Some common worries about a standby in winter just aren't so. Let's clear the air.

- **'I should cover it up or box it in for winter.'** Never — it needs to breathe and vent. Keep snow off it, but leave it open exactly as installed.
- **'Cold will keep it from starting.'** A properly serviced unit with the right cold-weather kit is built to start in our winters.
- **'Propane just won't work when it's freezing.'** It vaporizes less freely in extreme cold, which is why the gas pro sizes the tank for it — not a reason to avoid propane.
- **'It's fine to skip service if it ran all summer.'** Winter is when you'll lean on it hardest, so fall service matters most, not least.
- **'The weekly test is a waste in winter.'** It's keeping the battery charged and the engine ready for exactly the storm you're worried about.

✓ When in doubt, ask

There's no silly question about your generator in winter. If something has you unsure, ask your installer — or ask me — before the next storm, not during it.

Your winter readiness checklist

Run through this before the first hard freeze, and again anytime a big storm is in the forecast.

- ☐ Routine service is done, and any cold-weather kit is fitted and working.
- ☐ The battery has been checked, and replaced if it was weak.
- ☐ The area around the unit is clear, with room to reach it in the snow.
- ☐ The exhaust and vents are open, and I know where to keep them clear.
- ☐ On propane, the tank is topped up and the gas pro has sized it for the cold.
- ☐ Carbon-monoxide alarms inside are tested, with fresh batteries.
- ☐ I've confirmed the weekly self-test is running — in person or by the app.

★ I can run this list with you

A fall visit covers this whole checklist in less time than you'd think, and it's a lot more reassuring than hoping it all still works. Call (330) 200-8042.

After a big snow or ice storm

Once a storm passes, a quick trip out to your standby keeps it dependable for the next one.

Whether the power stayed on or the generator carried you through, snow and ice don't know the difference — they pile up either way. A short walk-around after the storm clears is all it takes to keep the unit breathing and safe.

- Brush snow and ice off the top, sides, and especially the exhaust and vents.
- Clear away any drift that built up against the unit during the storm.
- Check that roof runoff or icicles aren't dripping onto or around it.
- If it ran a long time or showed a fault, schedule a service check.

! Clear the exhaust first, every time

Before anything else, make sure the exhaust and vents are open. That one habit, done after every storm, is the heart of keeping a standby safe in winter.

If it won't start or shows a fault

A standby is licensed, professionally installed equipment — so if something's wrong in the cold, the fix is a call, not a project.

Most winter trouble traces back to a tired battery, missed service, or a cold-weather kit that wasn't fitted. You can note what you're seeing — whether the weekly test ran, any warning light or code, whether it tried to start — but the actual diagnosis and repair belong to your installer or service company.

! Don't tinker with a standby yourself

The electrical and gas connections are licensed work, and poking around a fault can be both dangerous and a way to void your warranty. Note the fault, keep snow clear of the unit, and call your installer. If you ever smell gas, leave and call the gas company or 911 first.

This is also where a monitoring app earns its keep — it can flag a fault early, sometimes before you'd notice, so you can get it seen to before the next storm.

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 through winter.

- **What I help with:** walking your winter readiness checklist with you, setting up monitoring and cold-weather alerts on your phone, and lining up a trusted pro for fall service.
- **What only licensed pros do:** fitting cold-weather kits, sizing and placing a propane tank, and any repair to the electrical or gas side.
- **What I never do:** the licensed work myself — your safety in a winter storm deserves the real thing.

I don't sell generators and I earn no commission, so my only aim is helping you head into winter confident. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for setting up an app or talking through your winter plan I can often help right on your screen for \$49.

★ Let's get ahead of winter together

The best time to reach me is in the fall, before the first storm. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and let's make sure your standby is ready when you need it most.

Winter questions worth asking

Whether you're talking to your installer or to me, these questions get your standby squared away for the cold.

Q: Does my unit have the cold-weather kit it needs for our climate?

Ask your installer whether a battery warmer, oil warmer, or other accessory is fitted and appropriate for where you live. It's their call to make and confirm.

Q: Is my propane tank sized and placed for cold-weather vaporization?

For a propane unit, the gas pro should account for how cold affects the fuel. Confirm your tank is set up to keep feeding the generator through a long, frigid outage.

Q: When should I have it serviced for winter?

Ahead of the season is ideal, so any problem turns up while the weather's still fine. Ask about timing and whether a service plan covers a fall visit.

Q: How will I know if there's a problem before a storm?

Ask about monitoring and alerts to your phone, so a fault or a missed self-test reaches you early — while there's still time to act.

✓ There's no silly question

If an answer about winter readiness leaves you unsure, ask again — or ask me. Better a plain question now than a cold surprise later.

Common Questions

The winter questions I hear most about standby generators, answered plainly.

Q: Can my standby really run outside all winter?

Yes — it's built for exactly that. It lives outdoors in a weatherproof housing year-round. Your job is to keep snow off it and its vents and exhaust clear, not to protect it from the cold.

Q: Do I need to do anything special when it's snowing?

Keep the snow from piling up on or around it, and make sure the exhaust and vents stay open. A quick clear-off after each storm is the main winter habit.

Q: Why is a snow-blocked exhaust such a big deal?

Because the exhaust carries carbon monoxide, and if snow blocks it, those fumes can collect around the unit and work toward the house. Clearing it is a safety must, not just tidiness.

Q: Will propane work when it's really cold?

It vaporizes less freely in extreme cold, which is why a licensed gas pro sizes and places the tank for our winters. Set up right, propane carries a standby through the cold just fine.

Q: Should I cover my standby in winter to protect it?

No — never box it in or cover a unit that may run. It needs to breathe and vent. Just keep the snow brushed off and the area around it clear.

★ Still have a winter worry?

Getting a standby through an Ohio winter is one of the most common things folks ask me about this time of year. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and let's talk through your setup.

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 getting your standby generator through winter 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

What Winter Asks of Your Standby

What the cold does, and what handles it

	What cold does	What handles it
Starting	A bit harder	Cold-weather kit
Battery	Loses punch	Warmer + upkeep
Propane	Vaporizes less	Right tank size
Snow	Piles on it	You clear it off

Built for the cold — a little readiness handles the rest.

Getting Ready Before the Snow Flies

The fall habits that make winter easy



Get ready in the fall, and winter stops being a worry.

After a Storm: Do This, Not That

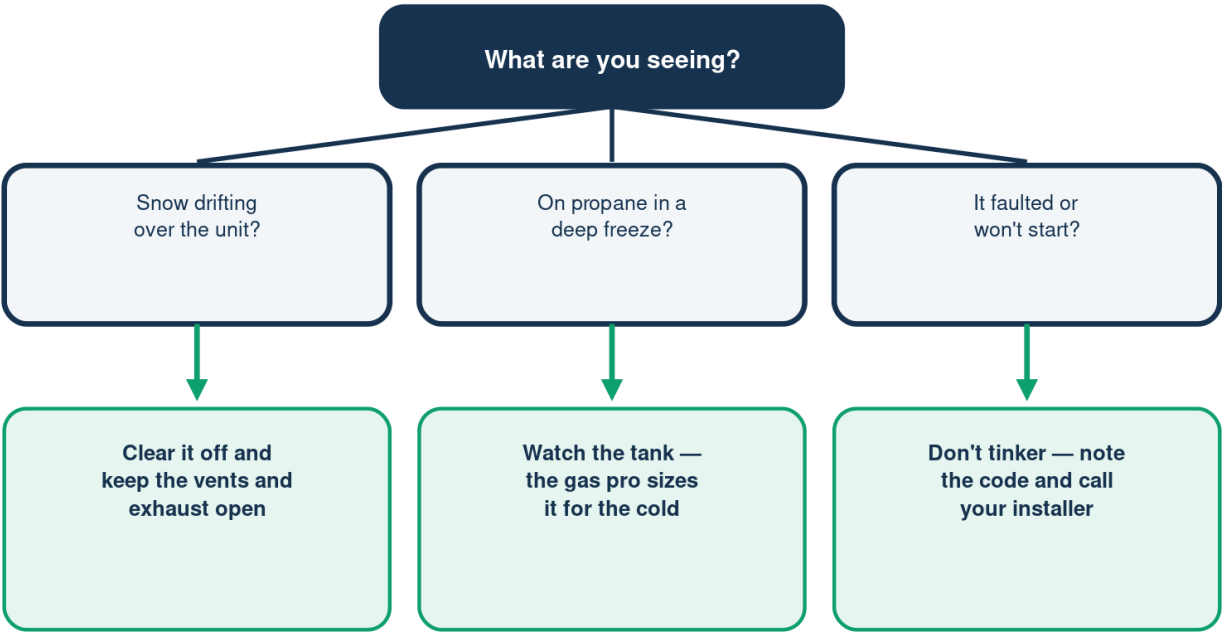
Snow and ice raise the stakes, not the rules

	Do this	Not this
Around unit	Brush it clear	Leave it buried
Vents/exhaust	Keep them open	Packed with snow
Plowing	Aim snow away	Pile it on top
If it faults	Call installer	Poke around it

Clearing the exhaust after every storm is the heart of winter safety.

A Winter Worry? Here's the Move

Work through it calmly, in order



Snow-blocked exhaust is a carbon-monoxide danger — clear it off first.

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.

(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