



An Extended Guide · No. 1302

What a Standby Really Costs

An honest look at
the whole investment

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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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. Part of what you are paying for is a professional who sets the unit outdoors to the maker's and code's clearances, and that safety margin is the one place you never want to shop for a discount.

Let's talk honestly about what this costs

A whole-home standby generator is a real investment — bigger than a portable — and you deserve a plain, honest picture of what goes into that number before anyone hands you a quote.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I don't sell generators and I earn no commission, so I have no reason to talk the price up or down — just to help you understand it. Think of this as me at your kitchen table, laying out where the money actually goes.

I won't quote you dollar figures for the unit or the install. They vary too much from home to home to be honest, and a number I made up would only mislead you. What I can do is show you every piece that makes up the cost, and what pushes it higher or lower, so no part of the quote catches you by surprise.

★ No sales pitch, just honest math

If you'd like a second set of eyes on a quote before you sign anything, that's exactly the kind of call I love — and there's nothing to sell you. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you will understand a standby generator's cost better than most.

- ❑ The price is never just the machine — it's the unit, the transfer switch, the electrical work, the gas work, the pad, the permit, and the labor to tie it all together.
- ❑ A bigger unit, longer gas or electrical runs, or an electrical panel that needs updating all push the number up.
- ❑ There's a cost to owning it, too: fuel over time, routine maintenance, and often a service plan — not just the day it goes in.
- ❑ The value is automatic, hands-free backup that works whether you're home or away — protecting food, heat, water, and peace of mind.
- ❑ No honest person can quote a real price sight unseen. The way to spend wisely is several itemized quotes from licensed installers.
- ❑ I don't sell generators, so I can help you read those quotes with no dog in the fight.

✓ The one-sentence version

You're buying a permanent, automatic backup system and the licensed work to install it safely — so weigh the whole picture, not just the sticker on the machine.

Why it costs more than a portable

If you've priced a portable generator, a standby can look like a big jump. Here's why the two aren't really the same purchase.

A portable is a machine you buy off a shelf and operate yourself. A standby is a permanent system that gets built into your home — wired into your electrical panel and connected to your gas supply by licensed pros, on a pad, under a permit. You're not just buying a bigger machine; you're buying a professional installation.

That install is a big part of the cost, and it's also what makes a standby do everything a portable can't: start on its own, power your home automatically, and run without you lifting a finger. The higher number buys you a very different experience.

✓ A fair way to think about it

Compare a standby to a portable the way you would compare central air to a window unit. One costs more because it's built into the house and works on its own — and for some homes that's exactly worth it. Our standby-versus-portable guide weighs the two honestly.

What actually makes up the price

When an installer hands you a number, it covers a lot more than the generator itself. Here's what's usually folded in.

- **The generator unit:** the engine-and-generator that sits outside on its pad.
- **The transfer switch:** the automatic brain and safety gate that does the switching — licensed electrical work.
- **The electrical work:** wiring the transfer switch and tying into your panel, sometimes with a panel upgrade.
- **The gas work:** a licensed gas pro running or connecting the natural-gas line, or setting up a propane tank.
- **The pad:** a level concrete or composite base for the unit to sit on.
- **The permit and labor:** the fees, the inspection, and the coordinated crew time to tie it all together.

✓ This is why quotes can differ

Two quotes can land far apart because one includes a pad, a permit, and a panel upgrade while the other quietly leaves them out. The pieces above are your checklist for comparing fairly.

The pieces, side by side

Here's the same breakdown as a simple table, so you can picture where a quote's dollars are going.

The piece	What it covers
The unit	The generator that sits outside and makes the power
Transfer switch	The automatic switch and its licensed wiring
Electrical work	Tying into your panel, and any panel upgrade
Gas work	The fuel line or propane tank, by a licensed gas pro
Pad	The level base the unit is bolted to
Permit and inspection	The approvals that keep it legal and safe

★ **Ask for it broken out like this**

A good installer will happily itemize a quote this way. If one won't, that alone tells you something. Text me a quote at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you see what's in it and what's missing.

What moves the number up or down

Two homes rarely pay the same, and it isn't random. A handful of things drive most of the difference.

The size of the unit matters most — backing up your whole house takes a larger, costlier generator than covering just the essentials. So does how far the crew has to run gas and electrical lines from your equipment to the unit's spot.

- **How much you back up:** the whole house versus essential circuits changes the size of the unit and the switch.
- **Run lengths:** a longer gas line or a longer electrical run adds materials and labor.
- **Your electrical panel:** an older or full panel may need updating before a standby can tie in.
- **Fuel setup:** tapping an existing gas line is one thing; setting a new propane tank is another.
- **Air-cooled or liquid-cooled:** the larger liquid-cooled units cost more to buy and to maintain.

✓ Sizing drives a lot of this

How big a unit you need is a load calculation your installer does — never a guess. Our sizing guide walks through whole-house versus essentials, which is the single biggest lever on cost.

Fuel: a cost that shows up over time

Your fuel choice shapes not just the install but what the generator costs to run over the years — without me quoting you a nickel of it.

Natural gas

If your home already has natural gas, the unit can usually tap that line, and the fuel simply arrives on your regular utility bill as it runs. There's nothing to store and nothing to refill, which many folks find simplest.

Propane

On propane, you buy and store the fuel in a tank on your property, and you plan refills — especially for a long outage. It stores for years and works where there's no gas main, which out in the country is often the deciding factor.

✓ We compare the two in full

Which fuel is cheaper to run really depends on local prices and how your home is set up, so I won't pretend a number here. Our natural-gas-versus-propane guide lays out the trade-offs, and your gas pro confirms what your supply can feed.

The costs that come after install day

The quote covers getting it in. Owning it well has a few ongoing costs worth planning for — none of them a surprise if you know they're coming.

A standby is a bit like a car in this way: the purchase is the big number, but it also sips fuel when it runs, needs routine maintenance to stay ready, and many owners keep a yearly service plan so they never have to track it.

- **Fuel:** what it uses during outages and its brief weekly self-test.
- **Maintenance:** routine oil, filter, and battery care on the maker's schedule.
- **The battery:** a wear item that will need replacing over the years.
- **A service plan:** optional, but a common, predictable way to keep it covered and cared for.

✓ Budget for upkeep, not just the buy

Folks who plan for the yearly upkeep are never caught off guard. Our maintenance guide covers exactly what that care involves, and our warranty guide explains how a service plan can keep your coverage intact.

What that investment actually buys you

Cost is only half the story. The other half is what a standby quietly does for you, day and night, for years.

The heart of the value is this: a standby generator works whether you're home or not. It senses the outage, starts itself, and switches your home over automatically — no cords, no going out in the storm, no one who has to be home and able to run it.

For a lot of folks that hands-free, works-while-you-sleep-or-travel backup is the whole point. A portable can only help when someone is home, awake, and able to wrestle it out. A standby just handles it.

★ Value is personal

What a standby is worth depends on your life — your outages, your health, your travel, your peace of mind. I'm glad to help you weigh it honestly for your home, with nothing to sell you. Call (330) 200-8042.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The cost is similar for both kinds of homes, but what that money is worth can look very different depending on where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, your water keeps running from the city main during an outage, so a standby's value is mostly about comfort and continuity — food, heat, working from home, and not sitting in the dark.

- The value leans toward food, heat, internet, and staying comfortable and connected.
- Natural gas is often already at the house, which can keep the install and the running cost simpler.
- Essential-circuit coverage often delivers most of the value for a smaller outlay.
- On a tight lot, spending a little on thoughtful placement and quiet operation protects your peace with the neighbors, too.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country the math changes, because when the power quits your well pump quits with it — and no electricity means no water at all, for drinking, cooking, flushing, or the animals.

- A standby that covers the 240-volt well pump keeps water flowing, which for a rural home is a big part of the value.
- Rural outages tend to run longer, so automatic backup that carries you for days is worth more.
- Propane usually means a tank and a refill plan — an ongoing cost to fold into the picture.
- A freezer full of food, a flood-prone basement, or livestock can make an outage genuinely costly, which is value a standby earns back.

★ Let's weigh it for your home

Tell me whether you're on city water or a well, and what your outages are usually like, and I'll help you picture what a standby is really worth to you. Call (330) 200-8042.

What you are really protecting

It helps to name what a standby is guarding, because that's where its value lives.

- **Food:** a refrigerator and freezer full of groceries that an outage would spoil.
- **Heat and cooling:** a furnace or boiler in winter, and cooling that matters in a summer heat wave.
- **Water:** on a well, the pump that gives you every drop — no power, no water.
- **Your basement:** a sump pump that keeps working through the very storm that knocks the power out.
- **Medical needs:** powered equipment that someone at home depends on, backed by automatic power.
- **A home business:** the income and the work you'd lose sitting in the dark.

✓ Each of these has its own guide

If one of these is your real reason for looking, we go deep on it — our well-pump guide, our sump-pump guide, our furnace-and-AC guide, and our guide to standby power for medical equipment each cover their piece in plain English.

The parts that are hard to price

Some of a standby's value never shows up on a receipt, and it would be dishonest to pretend I can put a number on it.

There's a real comfort in knowing that if a storm rolls through while you're asleep or three states away, your home simply keeps its lights, heat, and refrigerator running. For folks who worry about outages — or care for someone who depends on power — that peace of mind is often the truest value of all.

A well-installed standby can also add to how a buyer sees your home down the road, particularly in areas prone to outages. I won't promise you a dollar figure — that depends on your market — but it's fair to count it as part of the picture.

✓ Value you feel, not just value you spend

When you weigh the cost, weigh this side too. A machine that lets you stop worrying about the next storm is doing something a spreadsheet can't fully capture.

Why itemized quotes are your best friend

Because so much of the cost is the install, the smartest money move you can make costs nothing: get several itemized quotes.

An itemized quote spells out each piece — the unit, the transfer switch, the electrical, the gas, the pad, the permit, the startup, and any warranty or service plan — as separate lines. That's the only way to compare two installers fairly, because it shows you what each one actually includes.

Get more than one. Quotes for the very same job can land a good distance apart, and seeing a few side by side is how you learn what's fair for your home and spot anything missing.

✓ Vetting the installer is its own skill

Getting good quotes is half the job; knowing how to vet the installer behind them is the other half. Our choosing-an-installer guide walks through licensing, references, authorization, and the exact questions to ask — so this page stays on the money, and that one covers the vetting.

When a quote looks too good

A quote that comes in far under the others isn't always a bargain. Sometimes it's a warning.

The pieces a corner-cutting installer leaves out are often the very ones that keep you safe and legal: the permit, the inspection, a needed panel upgrade, or using properly licensed electrical and gas pros. Skipping them can mean failed inspections, insurance and warranty trouble, and genuinely unsafe work.

! Cheapest is not the same as best value

If one quote is dramatically lower, ask exactly what it includes before you celebrate. Confirm it has the permit, the licensed electrical and gas work, and the pad — not just a machine set down and wired up on the cheap. Corners cut here are the dangerous kind.

★ Send me the quotes

This is one of my favorite things to help with. Text me the quotes at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you see, line by line, whether that low number is a deal or a red flag.

A few cost myths, cleared up

Some common beliefs about what a standby costs just aren't so. Let's clear the air.

- **'The price is basically the machine.'** The install — electrical, gas, pad, permit, labor — is often a big share of the total.
- **'I can save a bundle installing it myself.'** The electrical and gas work require licenses and a permit; doing it yourself isn't legal or safe and can void the warranty.
- **'Whole-house is the only real option.'** Backing up essential circuits often delivers most of the value for a good deal less.
- **'Once it's paid for, it's free.'** Fuel, maintenance, the battery, and any service plan are real ongoing costs to plan for.
- **'All quotes are basically the same.'** They vary widely by what's included — which is why itemized quotes matter so much.

✓ When a number confuses you, ask

There's no silly question about a quote. If a salesperson's answer leaves you more confused than before, ask again — or ask me. Clear beats clever every time.

Signs the investment is worth it for you

A standby isn't right for every home or every budget, and that's fine. These are the situations where folks are usually happiest they spent the money.

- Your outages are frequent or long, or a storm can leave you dark for days.
- You're on a well, so no power means no water at all.
- Someone at home relies on powered medical equipment, or heat and cold are a real health concern.
- You travel, or there are stretches when no one able to run a portable is home.
- A flooding basement, a freezer of food, or a home business makes an outage genuinely costly.
- The peace of mind of never thinking about it again is worth real money to you.

★ And when it isn't worth it

If your outages are rare and short and a portable suits you, I'll tell you so — I'd rather you spend well than spend big. That honesty is free. Call (330) 200-8042.

A calm way to plan the spending

If you decide to explore a standby, here's an order that keeps the cost from ever feeling out of control.

- ❑ Make your must-run list — what you truly want powered in an outage.
- ❑ Decide roughly on whole-house versus essential circuits, and your fuel.
- ❑ Get a load calculation and several itemized quotes from licensed installers.
- ❑ Compare the quotes line by line, on the same scope, not just the bottom number.
- ❑ Fold in the ongoing costs: fuel, maintenance, the battery, and any service plan.
- ❑ Ask about financing or payment plans if that helps you spread the cost.
- ❑ Decide at your own pace — a standby is a considered purchase, not a rushed one.

✓ You don't have to do it in a day

This is a big decision, and there's no prize for hurrying. Take it one calm step at a time, and lean on the other guides in this series for each piece.

When a portable is the smarter money

Because I don't sell either one, I can say this plainly: sometimes a portable generator is the wiser spend, and there's no shame in that.

If your outages are rare and brief, if someone able-bodied is usually home, and if the budget is tight, a portable can cover the essentials for a fraction of a standby's cost. It asks more of you each time, but for some homes that trade is exactly right.

The honest question isn't which one costs more — it's which one fits your life and your outages. Our standby-versus-portable guide walks through that decision without a thumb on the scale.

✓ Spend to fit your home, not the brochure

The best value is the system that matches how you actually live. For some that's a standby; for others a good portable. I'll help you land on the honest answer for you.

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 spend well.

- **What I help with:** building your must-run list, making sense of itemized quotes, spotting what's missing, and lining up licensed installers I trust.
- **What only licensed pros do:** the electrical work and transfer switch, the gas-line connection, and pulling the permit.
- **What I never do:** panel wiring, gas work, or the install itself — that's not my license, and your safety deserves the real thing.

I don't sell generators and I earn no commission, so when I look at a quote with you, my only interest is helping you understand it. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for going over quotes together I can often help right on your screen for \$49.

★ Call before you sign, not after

The best time to reach me is while you're still comparing quotes, not after the money's spent. A little guidance up front saves a lot of second-guessing. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Cost questions worth asking an installer

Whether you're talking to an installer or to me, these questions get you to a price you actually understand.

Q: Can you itemize the quote — unit, transfer switch, electrical, gas, pad, permit, and startup?

You want each piece as its own line, so you can compare installers fairly and see what's included. A good pro does this without being asked twice.

Q: Does this include the permit, the inspection, and any panel upgrade my home needs?

These are common places a low quote quietly leaves things out. Confirm they're in, or you're not comparing the same job.

Q: What will it cost to run and maintain over the years?

Ask about fuel use, the maintenance schedule, and whether a service plan is offered — the ownership costs, not just install day.

Q: Do you offer financing or a payment plan?

If spreading the cost helps, ask up front. Many installers offer options, and it's a fair question to raise early.

✓ There's no silly question

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

Common Questions

The cost questions I hear most from folks first looking into a standby, answered plainly.

Q: Why won't you just tell me a price?

Because an honest one depends on your home — the size, the runs, your panel, your fuel — and a number I made up would only mislead you. The right price comes from a load calculation and itemized quotes, and I'll gladly help you read them.

Q: What makes one quote so much higher than another?

Usually the size of the unit, the length of the gas and electrical runs, whether your panel needs updating, and what each quote actually includes. Itemized quotes make the difference easy to see.

Q: Is a standby cheaper to run than a portable?

Different, not simply cheaper. A standby uses fuel automatically and needs routine upkeep; a portable is cheaper to buy but asks your time and hands-on refueling every outage. It depends on how you'd use each.

Q: Are there ongoing costs after it's installed?

Yes — fuel when it runs, routine maintenance, an eventual new battery, and often a yearly service plan. None of it is a surprise if you plan for it, and our maintenance guide lays it out.

Q: How can I keep the cost down without cutting corners?

Right-size the unit to what you truly need, get several itemized quotes, and never skip the permit or licensed work. Our sizing and choosing-an-installer guides help you do exactly that.

★ Still have questions? That's what I'm here for

Understanding the cost 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 talk it through.

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 the cost of a standby generator 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 You're Actually Paying For

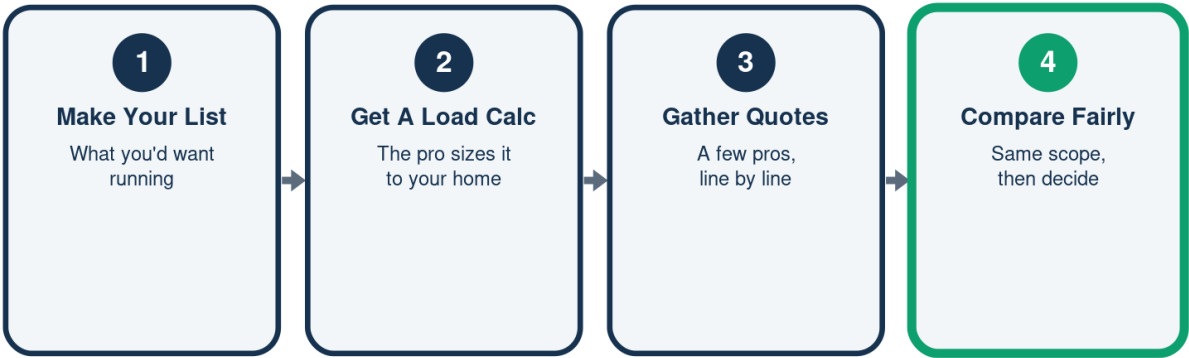
The price is never just the machine

The piece		What it covers
The unit	Engine outside	Makes the power
Transfer switch	Brain and gate	Switches safely
Electrical work	Panel + wiring	Licensed pro
Gas work	Line or tank	Licensed gas pro
Pad + permit	Base + approval	Inspected job

Get it itemized like this — it's how you compare quotes fairly.

From Curious to Covered, on Cost

The order that keeps spending under control



No number is honest without a load calc and itemized quotes.

Upfront Cost vs. Cost Over Time

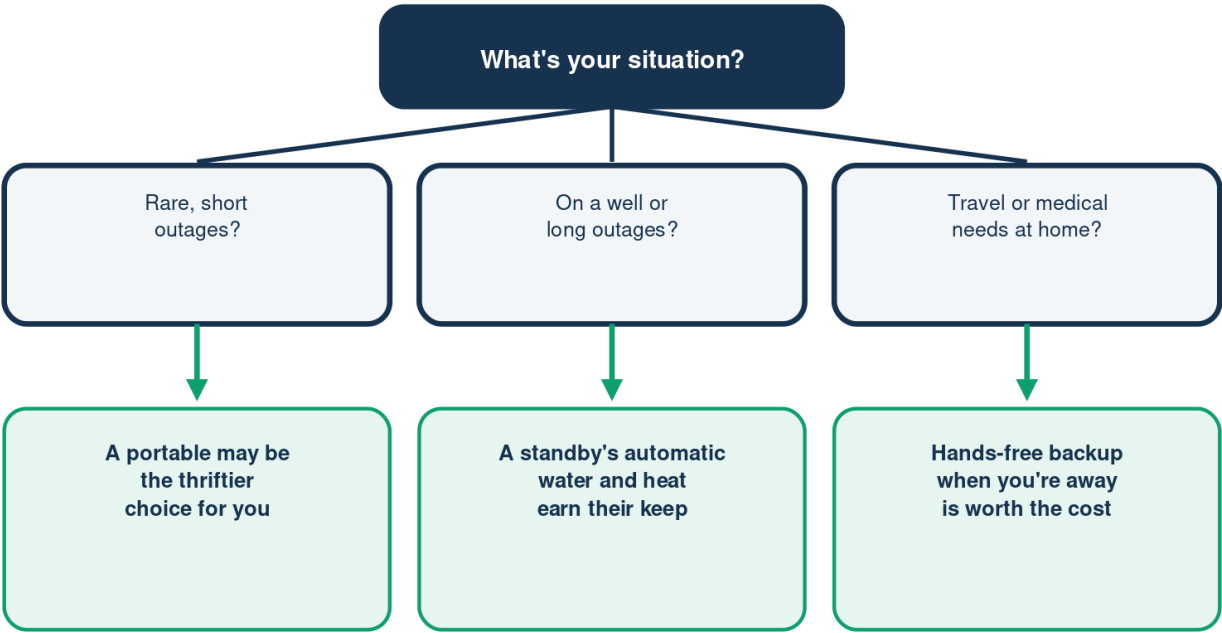
The purchase is only half the picture

	Pay once	Pay over years
What it is	The install	Owning it
Includes	Unit + labor	Fuel + upkeep
Big drivers	Size and runs	Use, service
Your move	Itemized quotes	Plan a budget

Both sides are real — weigh the whole cost, not just the sticker.

Is the Investment Right for You?

Let your situation point the way



No numbers here on purpose — get several itemized quotes from licensed pros.

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,
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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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