



An Extended Guide · No. 1297

Permits, Inspections and Codes

The paperwork that
keeps you safe and legal

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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. This is one quiet reason the permit and inspection matter — an inspector confirms your unit was placed and vented to code, so that paperwork is guarding the air you breathe, not just filling a file drawer.

Let's take the fear out of the paperwork

Permits and inspections sound like red tape, but they're really a second set of expert eyes making sure your standby generator was put in safely and correctly. This guide walks you through them, calmly.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30+ years of helping folks with the equipment in their homes, I've learned that the word 'inspection' worries people far more than the thing itself. So let's demystify it together, in plain English.

The best news is that a reputable installer usually handles the permit and the inspection for you, as part of the job. Your part is mostly understanding why it matters and confirming it's being done. The install itself has its own guide; here we focus on the paperwork.

★ Comparing installers right now?

How an installer talks about permits tells you a lot about them. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you sort the ones who do it right from the ones who cut corners — free.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you already understand what permits and inspections are really about.

- ❑ A standby install almost always needs an electrical permit, and often a gas or mechanical one too.
- ❑ A permit just means the work is registered and an inspector will confirm it's safe and up to code.
- ❑ The rules come from the national electrical code, local building and gas codes, engine-clearance standards, and the maker's instructions.
- ❑ A reputable installer usually pulls the permit and schedules the inspection — confirm that they do.
- ❑ Skipping the permit risks a failed inspection later, trouble with insurance or the warranty, and unsafe work you can't see.
- ❑ Your utility may need a heads-up, and a neighborhood association may have its own rules.
- ❑ None of this is meant to scare you — it protects you, and mostly it happens in the background.

✓ The one-sentence version

A permit isn't a punishment — it's permission plus a promise that a neutral expert will confirm the riskiest work in your home was done right.

What a permit actually is

Let's demystify the word. A permit isn't a cash grab or a hurdle — it's permission, plus the promise of a check.

When your installer pulls a permit, they're telling the local building department, in effect, 'we're adding a standby generator, and here's the plan.' The department logs it and lines up an inspector to look over the finished work.

That inspection is the real value. A trained, neutral person confirms the electrical and gas connections were done to code — the same code that keeps your home from backfeeding the power lines and keeps the exhaust safely away from your windows.

✓ It's a safety net, not a hurdle

Think of the permit and inspection as a free second opinion on the most safety-critical work in your home. You want that second set of eyes — and it costs you almost nothing but a little scheduling.

Why a standby almost always needs one

A standby generator ties into the two systems local codes watch most closely: your electrical panel and your gas supply.

Wiring in an automatic transfer switch is electrical work on your home's service, and that almost always calls for an electrical permit. Running or connecting the fuel, whether natural gas or propane, is gas work that often needs a mechanical or gas permit too.

Add the pad, the placement clearances, and sometimes a zoning or setback angle, and you can see why a standby is treated as a real improvement to your home, not a plug-in appliance. That's a good thing — it means someone confirms it was done right. Our installation guide shows where this fits in the whole job.

✓ Two systems, two sets of rules

The electrical and the gas each answer to their own codes and often their own permit. A full-service installer handles the whole mix so you don't have to keep it all straight.

The permits you might see

The exact mix depends on your town and your fuel, but these are the ones that come up most. Your installer will know which apply.

Permit	What it covers
Electrical	The transfer switch and panel wiring
Mechanical or gas	Running and connecting the fuel
Building or zoning	The pad, placement, and setbacks

Sometimes one permit covers several of these; sometimes they're separate. Don't worry about sorting it out yourself — this is exactly what a full-service installer handles as part of the job.

✓ Ask, don't assume

When you compare quotes, ask each installer which permits your job needs and whether pulling them is included. Our choosing-an-installer guide has more on comparing quotes fairly.

What the inspection actually checks

An inspection isn't a white-glove test or a hunt for reasons to fail you. The inspector confirms a handful of safety-critical things.

- That the transfer switch keeps generator and utility power from ever meeting — the anti-backfeed rule that protects you and the line crews.
- That the electrical connections, grounding, and panel work are done to code.
- That the fuel connection is correct and leak-free, and the gas work meets code.
- That the unit sits at the required clearances from windows, doors, vents, and combustibles.
- That the pad and placement are sound — level, stable, and safely sited.

✓ A pass is peace of mind

When it passes, you have documented proof that the riskiest work in this project was done right. That's worth far more than the small hassle of scheduling it.

The codes behind the rules

You don't need to memorize any of this — but it helps to know the rules come from established national-safety sources, not one inspector's mood.

The electrical side follows the National Electrical Code. Article 702 covers optional standby systems like a home generator, and 702.5 covers the transfer equipment that keeps generator and utility power safely separated. The clearances that keep the engine's exhaust and heat at a safe distance trace back to standards such as NFPA 37 for stationary engines.

On top of those, your local building, mechanical, and gas codes apply, and so do the manufacturer's own installation instructions — which the codes generally require your installer to follow. When all of those agree, you have a properly installed unit.

✓ Why so many rulebooks?

Each one guards a different risk — electrical, fire, exhaust, gas. Together they're why a permitted, inspected install is the safe kind. Our placement-and-pad guide explains the clearances in plainer detail.

Telling your utility

Depending on where you live and your setup, your electric utility may want to know a standby generator is going in.

Because a standby connects to your home's service through a transfer switch, some utilities ask to be notified so their records stay current and their crews know what's on the line. Your installer typically handles this coordination as part of the job.

This is separate from the building permit, and it's usually routine. The key is simply that it doesn't fall through the cracks — so confirm your installer is taking care of it.

✓ One more thing to confirm

When you ask who pulls the permit, ask about utility notification in the same breath. A full-service installer will have both covered without blinking.

Neighborhood and association rules

Beyond the town's codes, your neighborhood may have a say — especially where lots are close together.

Many homeowners' associations have rules about where a generator can sit, how it must be screened, and even quiet hours for its weekly self-test. These aren't safety codes, but ignoring them can mean an awkward letter or a costly do-over.

A quick check of your association's rules before the install saves trouble later. Any screening or landscaping has to respect the required clearances, though — our placement-and-pad guide and our noise-and-neighbors guide both cover how to keep the peace without boxing the unit in.

✓ Check early, relax later

Sorting out association rules while you're still planning is far easier than after the pad is poured. A five-minute look now can save a real headache.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The permit itself is similar wherever you live, but which departments and rules come into play can differ between a suburban street and a rural parcel.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, you're usually dealing with a single city or village building department, and often a homeowners' association on top of it. Natural gas is common, so the gas permit tends to be about connecting to a line that's already there.

- A city or village building department typically handles the electrical and gas permits.
- A homeowners' association may add rules on placement, screening, and self-test timing.
- With natural gas at the house, the gas permit covers the connection rather than a new tank.
- Close neighbors make the placement and setback part of the review more important.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, you may deal with a county building department instead of a city one, and if you're on propane, the tank brings its own placement and permit considerations. And keeping the well pump powered is usually the whole point of the project.

- A county office may issue the permits, and rules can differ from a nearby town's.
- On propane, the tank's size and placement can carry their own code and setback rules.
- There's often no association, but well and septic locations can affect where things go.
- The inspection still confirms the unit is sized and wired to safely start your 240-volt well pump.

★ Not sure whose rules apply to you?

Tell me your town or township and whether you're on gas or propane, and I'll help you figure out who to ask before you're mid-project. Call (330) 200-8042.

Who pulls the permit — and why it's usually the installer

Here's a question worth asking out loud before you sign anything: who is responsible for the permit?

In almost every case, the right answer is your installer. A licensed, professional installer pulls the permit, does the work to code, and meets the inspector — it's part of a proper, full-service job. That keeps the responsibility on the people doing the licensed work.

Be cautious if an installer asks you to pull the permit yourself, or suggests skipping it to save money or time. Homeowner-pulled permits can leave you holding responsibility for work you didn't do, and skipping one is a red flag about the whole operation.

! A telling question

How an installer answers 'who handles the permit?' tells you a lot. A good one handles it without hesitation. Hesitation, or a push to skip it, is worth walking away from.

Why skipping the permit backfires

It can be tempting to think a permit is just cost and delay. Here's why skipping it tends to cost far more in the end.

- **A failed or missing inspection** can surface later — when you sell, refinance, or file a claim — and force expensive rework.
- **Insurance trouble:** if unpermitted work contributes to a fire or damage, a claim can be denied.
- **Warranty trouble:** many manufacturers require a proper, code-compliant install to keep the warranty valid.
- **Unsafe work you can't see:** without an inspection, a hidden wiring or gas mistake may not show up until the worst moment.

! This is the one corner not to cut

Of everything in a standby project, the permit and inspection are the last place to save a dollar. They're your proof the dangerous work was done safely — and your protection if anything ever goes wrong.

Permits, insurance, warranty, and resale

A permit isn't just for install day — it quietly protects you for years afterward, in ways that are easy to overlook.

Your homeowner's insurance generally expects major electrical and gas work to be permitted and inspected. A permitted install, with its inspection on record, is exactly the documentation an insurer wants to see if a claim ever touches your generator.

The same goes for the manufacturer's warranty, which often hinges on a professional, code-compliant install, and for resale — a buyer's inspector or lender may ask whether the generator was permitted. Good paperwork turns a hard question into a non-issue.

✓ Keep the record with your home papers

File the permit and the passed-inspection record with your other important home documents. Future-you, at claim time or closing time, will be grateful you did.

Keeping your paperwork straight

A little organizing now saves a lot of digging later. Here's the short list worth keeping together in one place.

- ❑ The permit and the final, passed-inspection record.
- ❑ The installer's contract and itemized invoice.
- ❑ The manufacturer's warranty and your product registration.
- ❑ The model and serial information, and the maker's manual.
- ❑ Any service-plan paperwork and a log of maintenance visits.

✓ One folder, one spot

Keep it all in a single labeled folder with your home papers. If you'd like, I can help you set up a simple system so nothing wanders off between now and the day you need it.

What the whole thing feels like, start to finish

Put together, the permit process is far less dramatic than the word 'inspection' suggests. Here's the calm version.

Your installer pulls the permit before starting, does the work to code, and schedules the inspection. On inspection day, the inspector looks over the finished install, confirms the safety-critical points, and signs off. That's usually the whole story.

You mostly experience it as a couple of appointments the installer arranges. There's no test for you to pass and nothing to memorize — and I won't quote you a fee here, because permit costs vary by place and are best confirmed with your installer or building department.

✓ Boring is the goal

A permit process you barely noticed is a sign it went well. Quiet and routine is exactly what you want from this part of the project.

A few permit myths, cleared up

Some very common beliefs about permits just aren't so. Let's set them straight.

- **'A permit is just a money grab.'** The real product is the inspection — an expert confirming the riskiest work was done safely.
- **'My installer can skip it to save me money.'** A skipped permit saves a little now and risks far more later, and it's a red flag about the installer.
- **'It's my job to pull it.'** Almost always, the licensed installer pulls it. Be wary if they push it onto you.
- **'Inspectors are looking for reasons to fail me.'** They're confirming safety, not hunting for trouble — and good work passes routinely.

✓ When in doubt, ask plainly

There's no silly question here. If an installer's answer about permits leaves you uneasy, ask again — or ask me. Clear beats clever every time.

What I do, and what I leave to the pros

Worth saying plainly, since permits can feel confusing from the outside.

- **What I help with:** explaining the permit process in plain English, helping you ask installers the right questions, and making sure nothing important gets left to you by accident.
- **What the installer does:** pulls the permit, does the licensed electrical and gas work to code, and meets the inspector.
- **What I never do:** the licensed electrical or gas work, or the inspection itself — that's not my role, and your safety deserves the real thing.

★ Call before you sign

The best time to reach me is while you're still comparing installers and quotes — I can help you spot who handles permits properly. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Questions to ask about permits

These few questions get you to an installer who takes the paperwork as seriously as the wiring.

Q: Which permits will my install need?

A good installer can tell you which electrical, gas, or building permits apply to your specific job and town. A vague answer is worth a second look.

Q: Do you pull the permits and meet the inspector?

You want a clear yes. Pulling permits and handling the inspection is part of a full-service, professional install — not something to leave to you.

Q: Will you handle the utility notification too?

Ask whether your utility needs a heads-up and who takes care of it, so it doesn't fall through the cracks.

Q: Will I get copies of the permit and passed inspection?

Yes is the right answer — you'll want those records for insurance, warranty, and resale down the road.

✓ There's no silly question

A reputable installer welcomes these questions. One who seems annoyed by them is telling you something useful about how they work.

A calm word on gas and safety

Because a standby ties into your gas supply, a little safety awareness belongs in any talk about inspections.

Part of what the inspection confirms is that the fuel connection is correct and leak-free. That check is one of the quiet reasons the whole permit process is worth it — gas work is precisely the kind of thing you want a licensed pro to do and an inspector to verify.

! If you ever smell gas

Leave the area right away, don't flip switches or light anything, and call your gas company or 911 from somewhere safe. A gas smell is always treated as an emergency, never a wait-and-see — permit or no permit.

Between inspections, if anything ever seems off about the unit or its fuel connection, that's a call to your gas pro or installer, not a do-it-yourself fix.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about permits and inspections, answered plainly.

Q: Do I really need a permit for a home generator?

In almost every area, yes — a standby ties into your electrical panel and gas supply, which local codes watch closely. Your installer will confirm exactly what your town requires.

Q: How much does a permit cost?

That varies by place, so I won't quote a number that might be wrong. Your installer or local building department can tell you, and it's usually a small part of the overall project.

Q: What if the previous owner installed one without a permit?

It can surface at sale or claim time. It's worth having a licensed pro look it over and, if needed, help you get it inspected and made right — I'm glad to help you line that up.

Q: Will the inspection be a hassle for me?

Usually not. Your installer schedules it and meets the inspector; you mostly just provide access. There's no test for you to pass.

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

It's almost always better to let the licensed installer pull it, since they're doing the work and carry the responsibility. An installer who pushes the permit onto you is worth a second look.

★ Still uneasy about the paperwork?

Understanding the permit side before you commit is exactly what I'm here for, with nothing to sell you. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll talk it through.

Your permit peace-of-mind checklist

Before you sign with an installer, run down this short list. If you can check every box, the paperwork side is in good hands.

- ☐ The installer clearly pulls the permits and schedules the inspection.
- ☐ They can name which permits your specific job needs.
- ☐ They handle any utility notification too.
- ☐ You'll receive copies of the permit and the passed inspection.
- ☐ Any association rules have been checked before the pad goes in.
- ☐ Nothing important is quietly being left for you to arrange.

★ Want a second pair of eyes?

Send me a quote or two and I'll help you confirm the permit side is handled right before you commit. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

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 permits and inspections for 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.

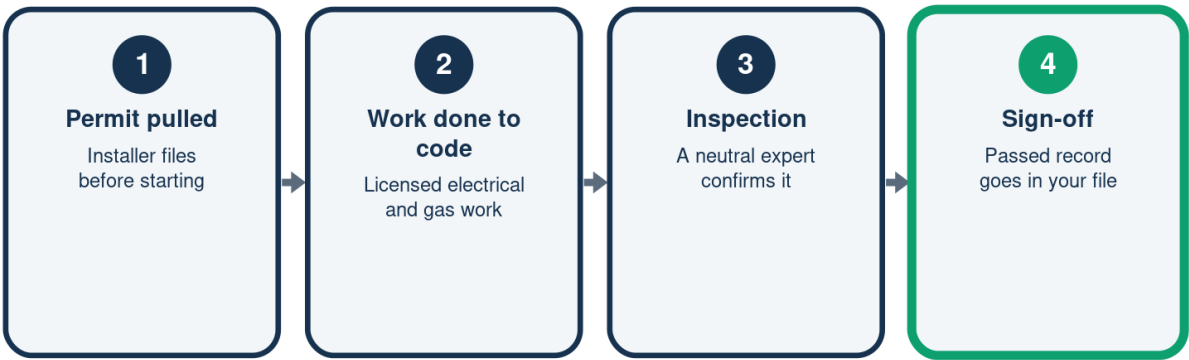
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

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How the Permit Process Flows

Mostly handled for you, in order



Your installer handles most of this — you mostly provide access.

The Permits You Might See

The exact mix depends on your town

Covers		Who handles it
Electrical	Switch and wiring	Your electrician
Gas or mechanical	The fuel hookup	Your gas pro
Building or zoning	Pad and setbacks	The installer

Sometimes one permit covers several — your installer knows.

Permit vs. No Permit

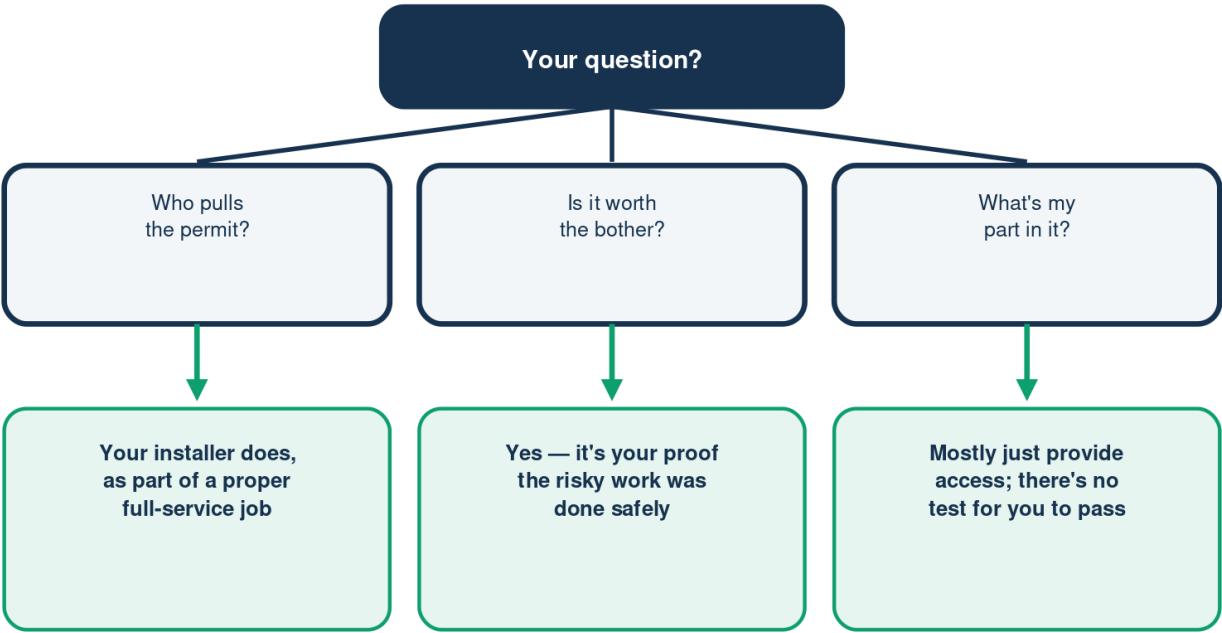
Why the paperwork protects you

	With a permit	Without one
Inspection	Expert confirms it	No one checks
Insurance	Claim supported	Claim at risk
Warranty	Stays valid	May be void
Resale	Clean paperwork	A red flag
Safety	Verified	Unknown

The permit is the one corner of a standby project not to cut.

Worried About the Paperwork?

It's simpler than it sounds



Never let an installer talk you into skipping the permit — it protects your safety and warranty.

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



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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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