



An Extended Guide · No. 1312

Storm and Outage Readiness

Your calm plan for
the next big one

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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. Even in the middle of a storm, that one rule holds — keep the unit clear and never enclose it, and let it do the rest.

Let's build your calm plan for the next big storm

Here's the happy truth I want to start with: if you have a standby generator, you've already done the hard part. The machine handles the outage itself. This guide is just the calm plan wrapped around it, so a storm feels more like an ordinary evening.

I'm Bill, and over 30-plus years I've watched what makes the difference in an outage. With a portable, it's all hustle — hauling, starting, refueling in the rain. With a standby, the work moves to a few quiet things you do ahead of time, plus a little checking-in while it runs. That's a much gentler kind of ready.

Think of this guide as the map that ties the whole standby series together — servicing, fuel, the well pump, medical needs, monitoring — into one before, during, and after plan. Each piece has its own deeper guide; this one shows how they fit.

★ Not sure where to start?

If it feels like a lot at once, don't worry — it isn't, and you don't have to do it alone. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you figure out the one or two things worth doing first for your home.

The whole plan, on one page

If you remember only these things, you're most of the way to storm-ready.

- ❑ The hard part is done: your standby starts itself and powers the house on its own.
- ❑ Before a storm — keep it serviced and tested, the battery healthy, and the area clear.
- ❑ Before a storm — top up propane if that's your fuel, and know how to check your system and its app.
- ❑ Before a storm — test your CO alarms and have a plan for medical needs, water, and food.
- ❑ During — let it run; check the app, keep snow and debris clear of it, and don't touch or enclose it.
- ❑ After — it switches back and cools itself; note any faults and book service if it ran a long stretch.

✓ Do the 'before' work on a calm day

Every before-the-storm item is easier to handle on an ordinary Tuesday than when the wind is picking up. Don't wait for a forecast.

Think in three phases — and the machine does the middle one

Nearly all of storm readiness with a standby comes down to three simple phases, and the good news is the unit itself owns the hardest one.

Before is everything you do on a calm day — servicing, fuel, alarms, and knowing your system. During is the outage itself, which your standby largely handles on its own; your job is mostly to check on it. After is a short wrap-up so the next storm is even easier.

Compared to a portable, where 'during' means hours of hands-on work, a standby quietly does the heavy lifting. That's exactly why the plan in this guide leans so much on the calm 'before' — get that right, and the storm mostly takes care of itself.

✓ Keep this guide where you'll grab it

Unlike the deeper guides in this series, this one is meant to be your at-a-glance map. Keep it somewhere you'll actually reach for when a forecast turns serious.

Before: keep it serviced and let it test itself

A standby that's been cared for is one you never have to think about when the sky turns dark.

Your unit runs a brief self-test on a schedule — commonly once a week — to keep the engine ready and the battery charged. Let it run its full cycle, and notice that it happens. A skipped or troubled self-test is the earliest hint that something needs attention, long before an actual outage.

Beyond that, it needs routine care a bit like a car — oil, filters, and a periodic checkup on the maker's schedule. Many owners keep an annual service plan so they never have to track it. Our maintenance guide covers the whole rhythm; the point here is simply to have it handled before storm season, not during it.

✓ A serviced unit is a storm-ready unit

If it's been a while since your standby had a professional once-over, the calm weeks before storm season are the time. Our maintenance guide walks through what a good service visit includes.

Before: mind the battery and keep the area clear

Two small things quietly decide whether a standby starts when it's finally asked to.

The starting battery is the most common reason a standby doesn't fire up — it's a wear item, like a car battery, and it doesn't last forever. The self-test helps keep it charged, but it still needs replacing on schedule. If your unit ever seems slow to start its test, mention it to your service pro before a storm, not after.

The other thing is the area around the unit. Keep it open and clear year-round — no stored clutter, no crowding shrubs, and nothing built over or against it. Before a storm, do a quick walk-around and clear anything that's crept in. In winter, that means staying ahead of snow and ice, too.

! The battery is the usual culprit

If your standby is a few years old and you've never replaced the starting battery, put that at the top of your before-the-season list. Our maintenance guide and cold-weather guide both cover keeping it healthy.

Before: have your fuel ready

Your standby feeds itself from a permanent fuel supply — but a little planning still pays off before a long outage.

If you're on natural gas from the utility, there's usually nothing to do; the supply keeps flowing on its own during most outages. That's one of natural gas's real comforts — runtime isn't something you have to ration.

If you're on propane from a tank, top it off before storm season or a big forecast, and keep a refill plan in mind for a long outage. A tank holds a finite amount, so knowing how to read its gauge and who to call for a fill is worth sorting out on a calm day. Our [natural-gas-versus-propane guide](#) goes deeper on both.

✓ On propane? Top up before the season

Heading into winter or an active forecast with a full tank means one less thing to think about. Don't wait until an outage to discover the gauge is low.

Before: know your system and set up monitoring

You don't need to be a technician — but knowing a few basics turns a strange noise into an expected one.

Learn where your automatic transfer switch is, what the unit sounds like during its weekly self-test, and how to tell at a glance whether it's running normally. When the power drops and the unit rumbles to life, you'll recognize it as the plan working, not a worry.

Most modern standby units offer Wi-Fi or cellular monitoring with a phone app — status, the weekly self-test result, and alerts if it runs, loses utility power, or faults. Some can notify a family member or your installer too. It's wonderful for travelers, and for adult kids keeping an eye on a parent's home.

★ I'm glad to help you set up the app

Getting monitoring alerts onto your phone — and a family member's, if you like — is exactly the kind of thing I help with. Our monitoring guide walks through it, or call me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll set it up together.

Before: alarms tested, and a plan for people

The machine covers the power. A few plans cover the people who depend on it — read the parts that apply to you.

Test your carbon-monoxide alarms and make sure there's a working, battery-backup one on every level and outside every bedroom. A standby is placed outdoors by pros, but alarms inside are still your reliable warning. Our carbon-monoxide guide covers this fully.

- **Medical needs:** a standby is one strong layer, not the whole plan — keep maker-approved battery backups, register with your utility's medical priority list, and see our medical-equipment guide.
- **Water:** if you're on a well, no power normally means no water — a standby sized to the pump keeps it flowing. Store some drinking water anyway. See our well-pump guide.
- **Food:** know your fridge-and-freezer-closed habits so a brief transfer gap is never a worry.

! CO alarms are non-negotiable, and cost little

Whatever else is on your list, put tested carbon-monoxide alarms at the top of it. Our carbon-monoxide guide covers exactly where they go and how to test them — do it this week if you haven't.

The complete before-the-storm checklist

Work through this once, then simply keep it up season to season.

- ☐ The unit has been serviced, and its weekly self-test runs cleanly.
- ☐ The starting battery is healthy or recently replaced.
- ☐ The area around the unit is open and clear.
- ☐ Propane is topped up — or you're on natural gas with nothing to refill.
- ☐ You know your system and have monitoring alerts set up.
- ☐ CO alarms are tested and in place on every level.
- ☐ Plans are set for medical needs, well water, and food.

✓ Do this on a calm weekend, not during a warning

Every box here is easier to check on an ordinary day. That's the whole point of doing it now, while there's no wind in the trees.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The before, during, and after plan is the same everywhere. What changes is how much rides on it — and how long the storm is likely to keep you company.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, outages tend to be shorter and help is closer, so a standby is mostly about comfort, food, and staying connected without a fuss.

- City water usually keeps flowing, so your plan leans toward heat, the fridge, medical needs, and internet.
- On natural gas, there's often nothing to refuel — your before list is short and mostly about servicing and alarms.
- Smaller lots mean the unit sits close to the house and neighbors — keep it clear and let the self-test run at a considerate hour.
- Even a short outage deserves the same calm before-the-storm check; you just won't sweat the fuel.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a well, the plan carries more weight — no power normally means no water, and rural outages tend to run longer past the last mile of line.

- A standby sized to the 240-volt well pump keeps water flowing automatically — store some drinking water anyway.
- On propane, top the tank up before the season and keep a refill plan for a long stretch.
- Longer outages mean the unit runs unattended for days — monitoring alerts and clear-it habits matter more.
- Deeper snow and blowing drifts mean checking the unit and its exhaust after every storm.

★ Let's build the plan for your specific home

Town or country, on city water or a well, the right plan depends on your setup. Tell me about your home and your usual outages, and I'll help you fill in the gaps. Call (330) 200-8042.

During: it starts itself — here's what happens

This is the part you've been paying for, so let it reassure you: when the power drops, your standby handles the whole thing.

The automatic transfer switch is always watching the utility power. The instant it senses an outage, it signals the generator to start, allows a brief warm-up, and then switches your home over to generator power — usually within seconds. You may barely notice the gap. When the utility returns and holds steady, it switches back and shuts the generator down after a cool-down.

You don't flip anything, haul anything, or go outside in the storm. If you're asleep, at work, or three states away, it happens just the same. Our transfer-switch guide explains the sequence in plain English, but the short version is: it's doing exactly what it's built to do.

✓ A few seconds of dark is normal

There's usually a brief pause between the outage and the generator taking over. For sensitive electronics or a CPAP, a small battery backup bridges those seconds — our medical-equipment guide covers that.

During: what to check while it runs

Your job during an outage is light — mostly a few calm glances, not any real work.

- Check the app or the unit's status light to confirm it's running normally.
- Keep snow, ice, leaves, and any clutter clear of the unit and its exhaust.
- Don't touch, cover, or enclose the running unit — it needs open air.
- Keep kids and pets away from it; it's warm, and it's an engine.

That's genuinely most of it. If the app shows a fault, or the unit shuts down and won't restart, that's the moment to call your installer or service pro — not to start troubleshooting it yourself. Note what the app or the unit reported so you can describe it clearly.

! Keep it clear, and keep alarms on

The same rule that governs a calm day governs a storm: the unit needs open air, and your CO alarms are your warning inside. Our carbon-monoxide guide covers both in full.

During: long outages and your fuel

For an outage that stretches into days, fuel is the one thing worth keeping an eye on — and only if you're on propane.

On natural gas, the supply generally keeps flowing throughout an outage, so there's usually nothing to watch. That's the quiet advantage of a piped fuel: you can mostly forget about it.

On propane, glance at the tank gauge now and then over a long outage, and arrange a refill before it runs low. If a fill can't come right away, you can stretch the tank by easing off the biggest optional loads — but let your load management and your installer's setup do that work rather than guessing. Our natural-gas-versus-propane guide and our load-management guide both go deeper.

✓ Know your gauge and your refill number

The time to learn how to read your propane gauge, and who to call for a fill, is a calm afternoon — not the third day of an outage. A note on the fridge does wonders.

During: food, comfort, and easy habits

With the power handled, an outage becomes mostly about ordinary comfort — and a couple of small habits keep it smooth.

Keep the fridge and freezer doors closed as much as you can; even with the generator running, it's a good habit that protects your food and eases the load. Your standby carries your heat — a gas furnace still needs electricity for its blower, and your standby provides it — and, depending on your system, your air conditioning too.

If your unit backs up essential circuits rather than the whole house, resist the urge to run every big appliance at once. Spreading out the dishwasher, the dryer, and the oven keeps things comfortable. Our furnace-and-AC guide and our load-management guide cover how a smaller unit can still keep you cozy.

✓ Note when the outage started

Jotting down when the power went out — and glancing at the clock now and then — makes food-safety and fuel decisions much easier, and gives you something concrete to tell your service pro later.

During: winter storms and the unit

Ohio's hardest outages come with ice and snow — exactly the weather that asks a little attention to the unit itself.

A standby is built to run outdoors year-round, and cold-weather kits help it start reliably when it's frigid. But during a snowy or icy outage, snow can drift against the unit and ice can build over its openings. If deep snow or ice covers where it breathes in air or pushes out exhaust, it can end up breathing its own exhaust.

So during a winter storm, clear snow and ice off the unit and away from its exhaust and air openings whenever it's safe to do so. Watch for snow sliding off the roof above it. Our cold-weather guide covers winter running in depth, and our carbon-monoxide guide explains why a buried unit is a real hazard.

! Keep it clear, even in the storm

It feels backwards to bundle up and go clear the generator during a storm, but a buried unit is the one winter danger worth braving the cold for — gently, and only when it's safe.

After: it switches back and cools itself

When utility power returns, your standby wraps things up on its own, too — no action needed from you.

Once the utility power comes back and holds steady, the transfer switch quietly moves your home back to the grid, lets the generator run a brief cool-down, and shuts it off. Then it returns to watching and waiting for the next time. You don't switch anything back.

If the power flickers a few times as the utility stabilizes, the unit may start and stop as it should — that's the system being cautious, not a fault. Within a little while it should settle back to standby, ready and quiet.

✓ No switching back for you to do

Unlike a portable, there's no powering-down routine to run. The most you'll do is glance at the app or the unit to confirm it's back in standby mode, resting until it's needed again.

After: note anything odd, and service a long run

A short wrap-up after the storm makes the next one even easier.

Glance at the app or the unit for any fault codes or alerts, and jot down anything that seemed off — a rough-sounding run, a shutdown, a restart that took longer than usual. A quick note now beats trying to remember later.

If the unit ran for a long, continuous stretch, it may be due for a service check sooner than the calendar suggests — much like a car after a long road trip. When in doubt, a call to your service pro after a marathon outage is time well spent. Our maintenance guide covers the ongoing schedule.

★ A quick after-storm check-in

If your standby did anything during the outage that gave you pause — ran rough, faulted, or was slow to start — that's worth a call before the next storm. Reach me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll sort out the next step.

Your map to the rest of the series

This guide is the hub — these are the guides that go deep on each piece of your plan.

If you need...	See our guide on...
Servicing and the self-test	Maintenance and the weekly exercise
Choosing or checking fuel	Natural gas versus propane
Carbon-monoxide safety	Carbon monoxide and exhaust safety
Backing up the well pump	Backing up your well pump
Powered medical equipment	Standby power for medical equipment
Monitoring and phone alerts	Monitoring, apps, and alerts
Winter running	Cold-weather readiness
Making a smaller unit go further	Load management

★ **Every guide in this series is free**

Read them in whatever order your home needs. And if you'd rather talk it through than read, that's exactly what a call to (330) 200-8042 is for.

The printable readiness checklist

The whole plan, condensed to what you'd want on the fridge before storm season.

- ☐ Before: serviced unit, healthy battery, clear area, fuel ready, monitoring set.
- ☐ Before: CO alarms tested; plans for medical needs, water, and food.
- ☐ During: let it run, check the app, keep it clear, don't touch or enclose it.
- ☐ During: on propane, watch the tank; keep the fridge and freezer closed.
- ☐ After: it resets itself — note any faults, and book service if it ran long.

★ Let's walk your whole plan together

If you'd like help turning this checklist into a plan that's specific to your home, that's exactly what a visit is for — call (330) 200-8042.

You've already done the hard part

If a storm is bearing down and you're feeling the flutter of nerves, let this be the page you turn to.

You have a machine outside that will start itself, carry your home, and shut itself down when it's over — whether you're awake or asleep, home or away. That's an enormous thing to have handled. Everything in this guide is just the calm, small work around it.

✓ Breathe, and let it do its job

Do the quiet before-the-storm things, keep the unit clear, keep your alarms on, and then let the machine do what it was built to do. You're readier than you feel.

Common Questions

The storm-and-outage questions I hear most from standby owners, answered plainly.

Q: Do I need to do anything when the power actually goes out?

Very little. It starts itself and switches your home over automatically. Your job is to let it run, check the app, and keep snow and clutter clear of it.

Q: What's the most important thing to do before a storm?

Have it serviced with a healthy battery, keep the area clear, test your CO alarms, and — if you're on propane — top up the tank. Calm-day work makes the storm easy.

Q: How will I know it's running normally?

You'll hear it, and your app or the unit's status light will show it running. Once you've heard the weekly self-test a few times, the outage rumble becomes a familiar, reassuring sound.

Q: It ran for two days straight — should I do anything after?

Glance at the app for faults, note anything that seemed off, and consider a service check sooner than usual, much like a car after a long trip. Our maintenance guide covers the schedule.

Q: I'm on a well — what changes for me?

Water depends on power, so a standby sized to the pump is a real comfort — store some drinking water anyway, and on propane keep a refill plan. Our well-pump guide goes deep.

★ Let's make your storm plan simple

You don't have to master the whole series overnight. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, tell me about your home, and I'll help you build a calm plan one sensible step at a time.

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 storm-ready with 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.

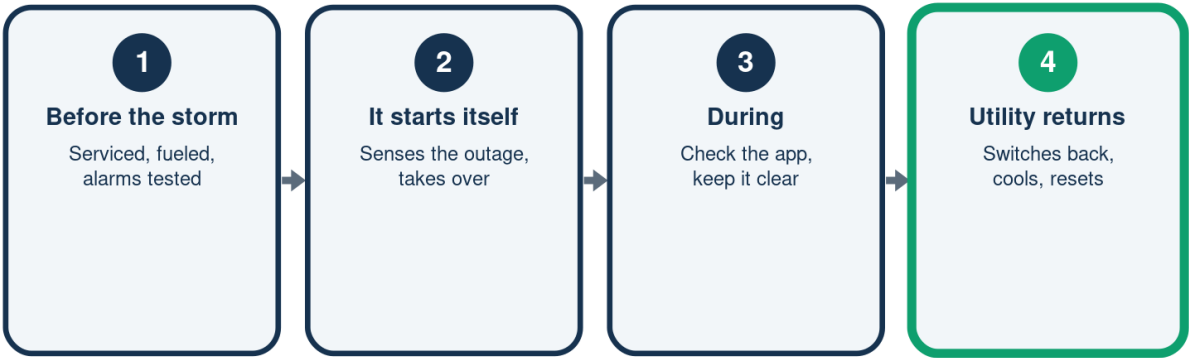
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★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

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Your Outage, Start to Finish

You do the calm 'before' — the machine does the rest



The hard part is handled — your job is the quiet part.

Before the Storm, at a Glance

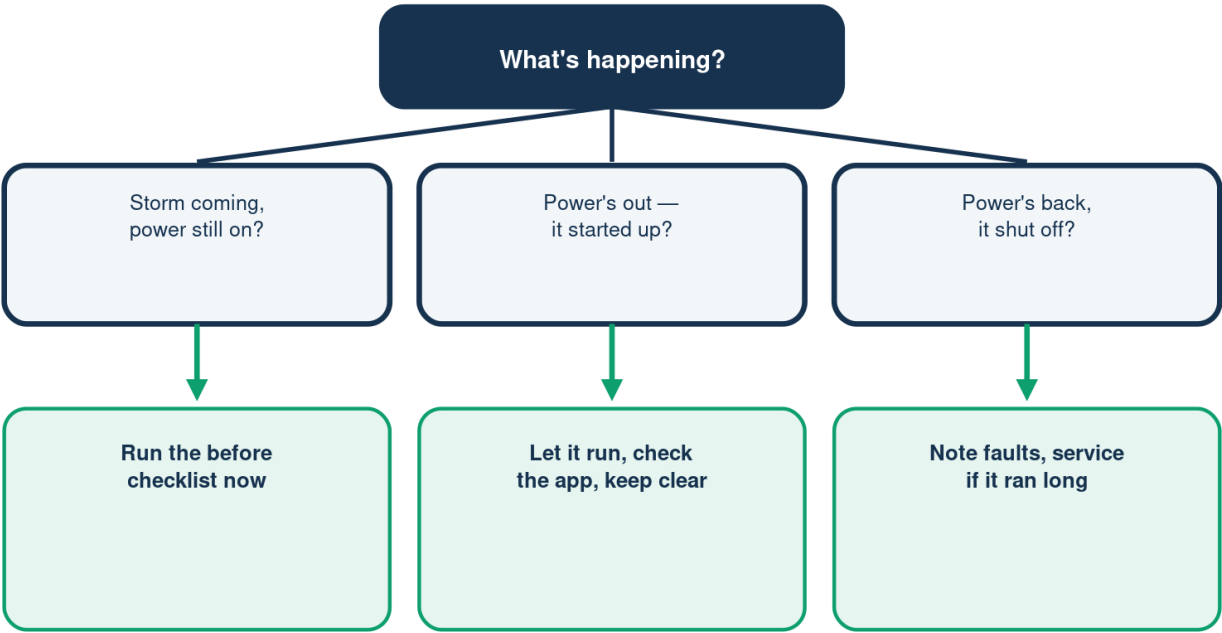
Handle these on a calm day, then just keep them up

	Get ready	How
The machine	Serviced,	battery healthy
The area	Open and	clear
The fuel	Ready for a	long outage
The people	Alarms, medical,	water, food

Calm-day work is what makes the storm itself easy.

Where Are You Right Now?

Match where you are to the next simple step



On a well or on propane? Add water storage and the tank level to every step.

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

The Difference a Standby Makes

In a storm, the machine does what you used to

	A portable	Your standby
When it starts	You start it	It starts itself
Refueling	By hand	Line or tank
If you're away	Nothing runs	It runs anyway
Your storm job	Operate it	Check on it

With a standby, the hard part is already handled.



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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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