



An Extended Guide · No. 1290

Storm-Ready: Your Outage Game Plan

Before, during,
and after the storm

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! Before you begin — a quick safety note.

This guide covers work involving engine exhaust, fuel, and household electricity, which can cause serious injury, fire, or property damage if something goes wrong. It's here for general information only, not professional advice. If you're not completely comfortable — or if your local codes require a licensed pro — please stop and hire a qualified electrician or generator installer. Turn off the power at the breaker before any electrical step. Never work on gas lines yourself; if you smell gas, leave right away and call your gas company or 911. There's no shame in calling a pro — that's often the smart, safe choice. You follow this guide at your own risk. — Bill

A Note From Bill

Every guide in this series covers a piece of the generator puzzle. This one is different — it's about pulling those pieces together into one calm plan you can actually follow when a storm's rolling in.

Nothing here is new information so much as it is order. Knowing what to do before, during, and after an outage — written down, in that order — is what turns a stressful night into a manageable one.

What you'll get out of this guide

- A before-the-storm checklist that takes the scramble out of prep
- A calm, safe sequence for running the generator during the outage itself
- What to do once the power's back on, so you're ready for next time too
- How the plan shifts a little for town homes and rural, well-water homes
- A cheat-sheet version you can keep with your generator

★ Write it down once

A plan you've written down, even briefly, beats the best memory every time a storm actually hits. Let's make sure yours exists. (330) 200-8042.

The Whole Plan in One Page

If you read only one page today, make it this one — everything else is the detail underneath.

- ❑ BEFORE: keep fuel fresh and on hand, exercise the generator monthly, and know your safe outdoor spot ahead of time.
- ❑ DURING: start it up with nothing plugged in, add loads a few at a time, and stay vigilant about carbon monoxide the whole time it runs.
- ❑ DURING: check on elderly or vulnerable neighbors if it's safe to do so — a storm is a community event, not just a household one.
- ❑ AFTER: shut it down safely, refill and rotate your fuel, and jot a quick note about what worked for next time.
- ❑ A short written version of this plan, kept with the generator, removes the guesswork every single time.

✓ This guide doubles as that plan

The cheat sheet at the back of this guide is built to be that written plan. Keep it where you'll actually find it during a storm.

Why a Written Plan Beats Winging It

You probably know most of what's in this guide already. The point of writing it down is making sure you use it under pressure, not just on a calm day.

- Outages tend to arrive with wind, dark, and a bit of adrenaline — exactly the conditions where a step gets skipped.
- A written plan turns “what do I do” into “what's next on the list,” which is a much calmer question.
- It also means anyone else in the house can follow it, not just whoever usually handles the generator.
- Ten minutes spent writing a plan on a calm afternoon saves far more than ten minutes during an actual storm.

✓ One page is plenty

This doesn't need to be elaborate. A single page with your safe spot, your fuel plan, and a few reminders covers most of what matters.

What Ohio Weather Tends to Bring

Portage County sees a real mix of outage-causing weather across the year — worth planning around more than one kind.

- **Winter ice and heavy, wet snow** bring down branches and lines, often for longer, multi-day outages.
- **Summer thunderstorms and high wind** tend to cause shorter, sharper outages — sometimes just a few hours.
- **Any season** can bring a surprise — a vehicle hitting a pole, equipment failure — so “storm season only” thinking leaves gaps.
- A plan built around your longest likely outage, not your shortest, tends to serve you best.

✓ Plan for the outage you haven't had yet

The outage that catches people off guard is rarely the kind they've seen before. A general, well-rounded plan covers more ground than one built around a single past storm.

BEFORE: Fuel On Hand and Fresh

Fuel is the easiest part of this whole plan to get ahead of — and one of the worst things to discover you're short on mid-storm.

- Keep propane cylinders or a tank topped off and ready — propane stores essentially indefinitely, so there's no downside to having it on hand early.
- If you keep gasoline, treat it with stabilizer and rotate it — don't let it sit untreated for months waiting for a storm that may not come.
- Know roughly how long your fuel supply will realistically last under real use, not just in theory.
- There are dedicated guides in this series on fuel storage and on propane tanks and cylinders if you want the fuller picture.

! Don't wait for the forecast

Fuel is hardest to get exactly when everyone else is also trying to get it. Keep your supply topped off as a standing habit, not a storm-warning reaction.

BEFORE: A Generator That's Actually Ready

A generator you haven't run in a year is a question mark. A generator you run monthly is a known quantity.

- Keep up the monthly exercise run — about 30 minutes under a little load — so you already know it starts.
- Stay current on oil changes and a basic filter and plug check, per your manual.
- If a storm is specifically forecast, a quick pre-storm check — oil level, fuel, a test start — is a smart extra step.
- There's a full guide in this series on maintenance by fuel type if you want the complete routine.

✓ The best time to find a problem

Finding out your generator won't start during a calm test run is an inconvenience. Finding out during an actual outage is a genuine problem. Test it before you need it.

BEFORE: Choosing and Marking Your Safe Spot

This is the single most important thing to decide ahead of time, not during the storm.

- Pick a spot outdoors, at least 20 feet from the house, with exhaust aimed away from any door, window, or vent.
- Make sure it's reachable safely in the dark — clear of ice, tripping hazards, and standing water.
- Consider a neighbor's windows and doors too, especially on a close lot.
- Mark it in your mind, or even with a simple physical marker, so there's no debate about it once a storm hits.

! This is not the decision to make in the moment

Choosing the spot during an actual storm, tired and rushed, is exactly how the 20-foot rule gets shortchanged. Decide it now, calmly.

BEFORE: Cords and Your Transfer Switch Ready

Whatever your connection method is, having it staged and tested ahead of time saves real time and hassle once the power's actually out.

- If you use extension cords, keep heavy-duty, outdoor-rated ones together in one place, sized for what you'll plug in.
- If you have a transfer switch or interlock, know exactly how to operate it, and test it occasionally so it's not the first time during a real outage.
- Keep any inlet box or connector accessible, not buried behind stored items.
- There are dedicated guides in this series on both extension cords and transfer switches if you want the deeper detail.

! Never a wall outlet, plan or no plan

No matter how organized your plan is, backfeeding through a regular wall outlet is never one of the options. Only cords to specific items, or a transfer switch or interlock.

BEFORE: Test Your CO Alarms, Write Your Checklist

Two last before-the-storm habits, and then the “before” phase of your plan is complete.

- ❑ Test every CO alarm in the house and confirm the batteries are good.
- ❑ Write (or copy from this guide's cheat sheet) a short before-during-after checklist and keep it with the generator.
- ❑ Share the plan with anyone else in the household who might need to run the generator.
- ❑ Do a final walk-through in your head: fuel, generator, spot, cords, alarms — all covered.

✓ The checklist is the whole point

A plan that only lives in your head can get lost in a stressful moment. A short list on paper, taped near the generator, doesn't.

The Plan for Town and Suburban Homes

Town outages tend to be shorter, but a few details in your plan are still worth tailoring to close neighbors and tighter lots.

- **Prioritize the sump pump** alongside the fridge and furnace — a town basement flooding during a storm is a common, preventable loss.
- **Plan around a shorter outage** in your fuel math, but don't assume every outage will be short — plan your fuel for a couple of days just in case.
- **Keep the generator's noise and exhaust considerate** of neighbors, especially if you're running it in the evening or overnight.
- **Check on neighbors**, especially elderly ones nearby, once your own setup is running — a quick knock on the door goes a long way.

✓ Renting or in a condo?

If a generator isn't practical where you live, your written plan might center on a charged battery power station instead — the same before/during/after thinking still applies.

The Plan for Rural and Well-Water Homes

Out in the country, the plan carries more weight — because for a well-water home, this isn't just about comfort, it's about whether water keeps flowing.

- **The well pump goes first in your load order.** Once the generator's running, get the pump started before layering on other big loads, so it gets its surge without competition.
- **Plan fuel for days, not hours.** Rural outages routinely run longer, and help and repair crews have farther to travel.
- **Keep a bigger propane margin** than you think you need — a well-water household that runs dry on fuel loses water, not just convenience.
- **Check on neighbors here too** — rural neighbors can be farther apart, which sometimes means less casual checking-in than in town.

A written plan matters everywhere, but for a rural, well-water home it's really a water plan wearing a generator's clothes. Treat it accordingly.

★ This is the plan I help with most

Building a solid outage plan around a well pump is some of my favorite work — it's calm, preventative, and it means you're never standing at the sink wondering if water's coming. (330) 200-8042.

DURING: The Safe Start-Up Sequence

This is the moment your “before” work pays off — the actual outage has started, and you already know exactly what to do.

- ❑ Move the generator to your pre-chosen safe spot, exhaust aimed away from the house.
- ❑ Select your fuel before starting — never change it while the engine is running.
- ❑ Start the engine with nothing plugged in yet, and let it settle for a minute.
- ❑ Plug in cords or switch on your transfer switch, then add loads a few at a time, biggest motor first.

✓ Slow down, even though it feels urgent

It's tempting to rush this the first time the power's actually out. The sequence works better, and safer, done in order and without skipping steps.

DURING: Keeping the Load Manageable

Running everything at once is the fastest way to trip a generator or overload it. A little rotation goes a long way.

- Keep your true essentials running steadily — fridge, furnace blower, a few lights, medical devices.
- Take turns with bigger, occasional loads — a microwave, a load of laundry — rather than adding them on top of everything else at once.
- If you're backing up a well pump, give it room to start before adding another big load at the same moment.
- There's a full guide in this series on running your home's essentials if you'd like the deeper detail.

✓ When in doubt, one thing at a time

Adding loads one at a time, with a pause between, is the single easiest way to avoid tripping the generator.

DURING: Refueling Safely, Mid-Outage

At some point in a longer outage, you'll need to refuel. A couple of habits keep that moment safe.

- Let the engine **cool completely** before adding gasoline — never refuel a hot or running generator.
- Handle propane cylinder swaps outdoors, away from any flame, with the generator off.
- If you ever smell gas while handling fuel, stop, step away, and treat it as a real leak — there's a full guide in this series on exactly what to do.
- Keep your fuel supply and the generator itself in their planned outdoor spots, not dragged closer to the house out of convenience.

! A tired mistake is still a dangerous one

Refueling mistakes tend to happen late in a long outage, when everyone's tired. Slow down for this step especially.

DURING: Staying Vigilant About Carbon Monoxide

This is the habit most likely to slip as an outage stretches on — which is exactly why it belongs in the written plan.

- Resist the temptation to move the generator closer to the house for convenience, even in bad weather.
- If you're covering it from rain or snow, use only an open-sided generator cover — never an enclosed box or a tarp wrapped tight.
- Keep checking that CO alarms are working throughout a multi-day outage, not just before it started.
- If anyone develops a headache, dizziness, nausea, or unusual sleepiness, treat it seriously — get outside into fresh air and call 911.

! Day three is when corners get cut

The first few hours of an outage, everyone's careful. By day two or three, fatigue sets in and shortcuts start to look reasonable. They aren't — the CO rules don't loosen with time.

DURING: A Storm Is a Community Event Too

Once your own household is squared away, a quick check on neighbors — especially older ones — is one of the best things you can do during a long outage.

- Elderly neighbors, especially those living alone, may not have a generator or a way to stay warm or cool.
- A phone call or a knock on the door costs you a couple of minutes and can genuinely matter.
- If a neighbor's generator is running dangerously close to their house, a friendly heads-up about the 20-foot rule could help.
- Portage County neighbors tend to look out for each other during storms — it's one of the nicer parts of living here.

✓ Add it to your written plan

If you've got a neighbor or two you'd want to check on, jot their name right into your plan. It's easy to forget in the moment otherwise.

AFTER: Shutting Down Safely

Once utility power is back, shutting the generator down the right way is just the start-up sequence in reverse.

- ❑ Unplug or switch off your loads first, before stopping the engine.
- ❑ Let the engine run free, unloaded, for a minute or two to cool down gradually.
- ❑ Stop the engine, then switch your transfer switch or interlock back to utility power.
- ❑ Let the generator cool completely before storing it or handling fuel.

✓ Don't rush the finish

It's tempting to shut everything off in a hurry once the lights come back on. A calm, ordered shutdown is just as easy on the generator as a calm start-up.

AFTER: Refilling and Rotating Your Fuel

Restocking right after an outage — while it's fresh in your mind — means you're ready for the next one without a last-minute scramble.

- Top off propane cylinders or your tank so you're back to a full supply.
- If you used gasoline, replace what you used with fresh, stabilized fuel rather than letting the can sit partly empty.
- Note roughly how much fuel the outage actually used — it's useful real-world information for planning next time.
- There's a dedicated guide in this series on fuel storage and shelf life if you want the fuller picture.

✓ Restock before you're tired of thinking about it

It's easy to put this off once the crisis has passed. Doing it within the first day or two, while it's still top of mind, is much more reliable than “I'll get to it.”

AFTER: A Few Notes While It's Fresh

The best time to improve your plan is right after you've actually used it, not months later when the details have faded.

- What worked well, and what you'd do differently next time?
- Did any load trip the generator, or did fuel run shorter than expected?
- Did the safe spot, cords, or transfer switch all work the way you expected?
- Update your written plan with anything you learned, however small.

A plan that gets refined after every real use becomes genuinely reliable over a few years. That's the whole goal of writing it down in the first place.

★ Tell me how it went

If we've worked together on your setup, I'd genuinely like to hear how it performed. It helps me help you fine-tune it for next time.

When to Give Me a Call

Building or refining a plan like this is exactly the kind of calm, preventative work I enjoy most.

- Putting together a written, household-specific outage plan from scratch
- A pre-storm-season check-up on the generator, cords, and connections
- Reviewing your plan after an actual outage and tightening up what didn't work
- Coordinating a transfer switch or interlock so the “during” phase is as simple as possible
- Walking your whole family through the plan so everyone knows their part

I come to you, here in Portage County and nearby, and I'm glad to help build a plan that fits your specific home, not a generic one.

★ Bill's Home Tech

Call or text (330) 200-8042. Tech Made Simple, Service Made Personal. Every visit is \$99 flat and 30-day come-back-free — if you're not happy, I'll make it right.

Your Written Outage Plan

Copy this page, fill in your own details, and keep it with the generator. This is the plan.

Phase	Do this
Before	Fresh fuel on hand, generator exercised monthly, safe spot chosen, cords/transfer switch ready, CO alarms tested
During: start-up	Safe spot, choose fuel, start with nothing plugged in, add loads a few at a time
During: ongoing	Manage loads, refuel only a cooled engine, stay vigilant about CO, check on neighbors
After	Safe shutdown (loads off first), refill and rotate fuel, jot notes for next time
Always	Outdoors only, 20+ feet from the house; never a wall outlet; call Bill with questions
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

Words People Use

A few planning-related terms in plain language.

Q: Load management

Deciding what runs on the generator at once, and rotating bigger items rather than running everything simultaneously.

Q: Safe spot

The pre-chosen outdoor location, 20+ feet from the house, where the generator always runs.

Q: Start-up sequence

The ordered steps for safely starting a generator and adding loads — spot, fuel, start, settle, then loads.

Q: Shutdown sequence

The reverse of start-up: loads off, let it cool, then stop the engine.

Q: Fuel rotation

Using and replacing stored fuel periodically so what's on hand stays fresh and ready.

Q: Written plan

A short, specific checklist for your own household's before/during/after outage routine — the whole point of this guide.

Your Outage Game Plan

The same three phases, every single storm

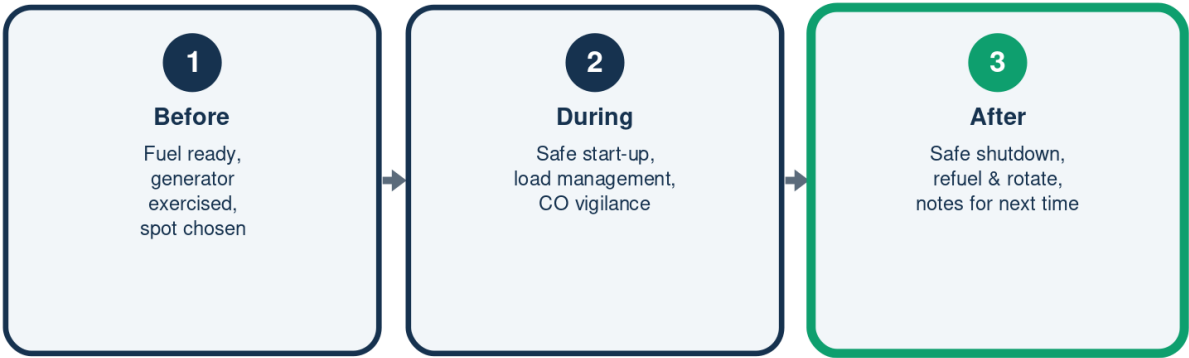


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

What Each Phase Covers

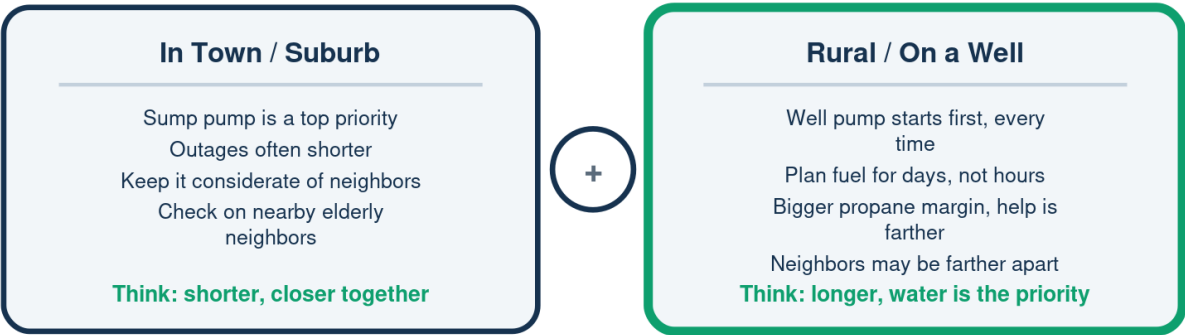
The written plan, at a glance

	Before	During	After
Fuel	Fresh & topped off	Refuel cooled engine only	Refill & rotate
Safety	Alarms tested, spot chosen	CO vigilance, no shortcuts	Cool down fully
Power	Cords/switch ready	Loads a few at a time	Shutdown, loads off first

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

Storm Plan: Town vs. Country

Same three phases, different priorities

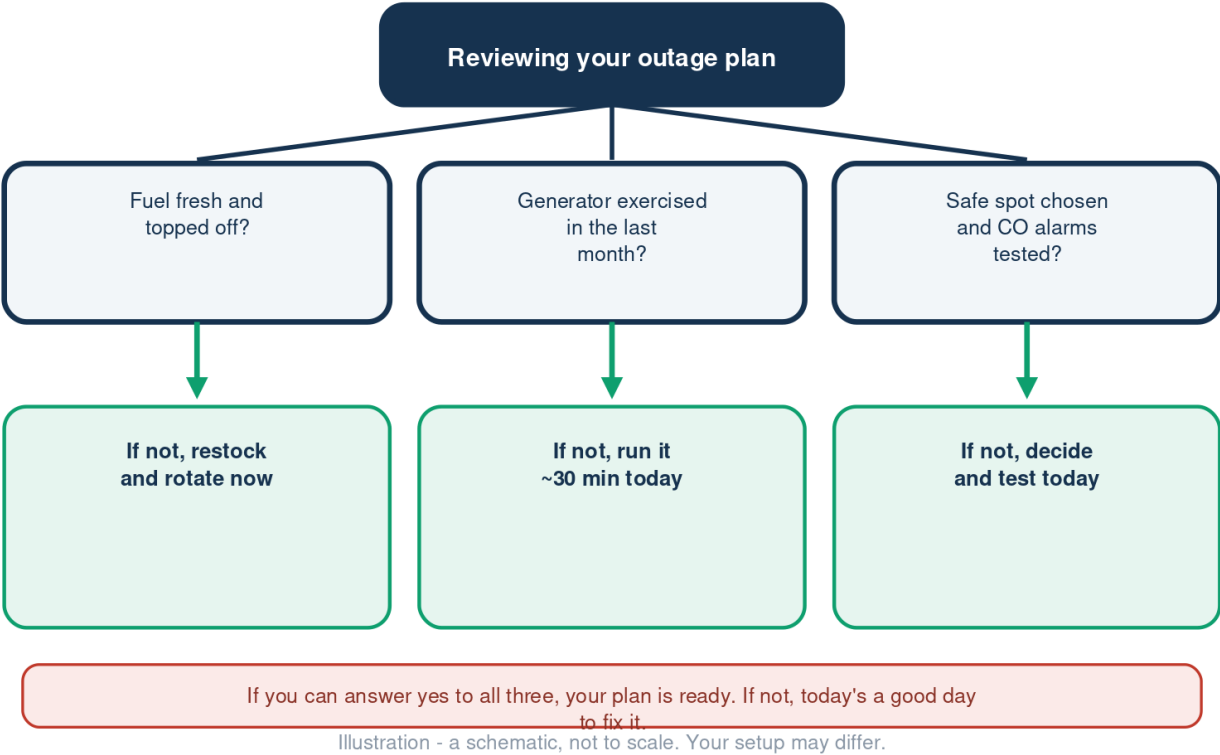


Both need the plan written down

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

Ready for the Next Storm?

Three quick checks before the forecast even calls for one





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— Bill

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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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