



An Extended Guide · No. 1837

After the Storm and Food-Safety Recovery

Back to normal — safely

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

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! Read this first — the real outage dangers are quiet ones

When the power goes out, most of the real danger doesn't come from the dark — it comes from how we try to get by without it. Every year people are harmed by carbon monoxide from a generator, grill, or camp stove brought indoors or into a garage, and by fires from candles and unvented heaters. So three rules run through this whole guide. First, never burn anything indoors that is meant for outdoors — no generator, grill, charcoal, or camp stove in the house, garage, or on a porch, not even with a window open. Second, reach for a flashlight or a battery lantern instead of a candle. Third, keep working smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms on every level, with battery backup, and never ignore one. If an alarm sounds, or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone to fresh air first and call 911. The danger doesn't end when the lights come back — spoiled food, downed lines, and lingering hazards all need care. This guide walks you through recovering safely.

Let's recover safely after the storm

The lights are back on — but a few important steps remain to get your home safely back to normal, starting with the big one: deciding what food is still safe to eat.

I'm Bill, and the after-the-storm stretch is where a lot of folks trip up. It's tempting to flip everything back on and eat what's in the fridge, but a little care here protects your health and your home. This guide walks you through it calmly.

We'll cover restoring power safely, the food-safety decisions the experts use, water safety, cleanup, documenting any damage, and — just as important — restocking your kit for next time. Let's get you back to normal, safely.

★ Questions after the storm? Call me

If you're unsure about restarting equipment, checking electronics, or anything else after an outage, I'm glad to help. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

After the storm, on one page

The essentials once the power's back.

- ❑ Turn appliances and electronics back on gradually, not all at once.
- ❑ Check the food: fridge safe about 4 hours, freezer by ice crystals.
- ❑ Throw out perishables held above 40 degrees over 4 hours.
- ❑ When in doubt, throw it out — never taste to check.
- ❑ After flooding, treat well water as unsafe until it's checked.
- ❑ Power down any generator safely, and store fuel.
- ❑ Document any damage for insurance, and watch for scams.
- ❑ Restock your kit so you're ready for next time.

✓ The food decision is the big one

Most after-storm risk is spoiled food. Check temperatures, follow the rules, and when in doubt, throw it out.

When the power comes back

Bringing everything back to life gradually protects your appliances and wiring.

When power returns, it can come back with a surge, and everything switching on at once can overload circuits. Turn major appliances and electronics back on one at a time, over a few minutes, and plug sensitive electronics back in once the power seems steady. If the power flickers or seems unstable, wait until it settles.

That single light you left on before the storm tells you at a glance when the power's truly back. Give it a minute to make sure it's steady before you start switching things on.

✓ Bring things back one at a time

Switching everything on at once can trip breakers or stress your wiring. Bring the big appliances back gradually, a few minutes apart.

The refrigerator food-safety decision

This is the most important call you'll make after an outage, so here are the rules the experts use.

A refrigerator keeps food safe for about four hours with the door closed. The key number is 40 degrees: perishable food — meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, milk, soft cheeses, cut fruit, and leftovers — held above 40 degrees for more than a couple of hours is no longer safe and should be thrown out. If you kept a thermometer in the fridge, its reading tells you exactly where you stand.

Some items hold up fine at room temperature for a while: hard cheeses, butter, many condiments, whole fruits and vegetables, bread, and anything unopened and shelf-stable. When you're unsure about a perishable item, let it go.

! When in doubt, throw it out — never taste

You can't tell by smell or taste whether food has become unsafe. If a perishable item was too warm too long, discard it without sampling it. A bad illness is far worse than the cost of the food.

Recovering your freezer

The freezer usually comes through better than the fridge — here's how to judge it.

Food in the freezer that still has ice crystals or is at 40 degrees or below is generally safe to refreeze or cook. A full freezer holds safely for about 48 hours closed, a half-full one about 24. If food has fully thawed and been above 40 degrees for more than a couple of hours, though, treat it like the fridge rule: when in doubt, throw it out.

✓ Ice crystals mean it's still good

The simplest freezer test: if the food still has ice crystals, it's safe to refreeze or cook. That's your quick yes-or-no for most items.

Water safety after the storm

Storms and flooding can affect your water, so don't assume the tap is safe just yet.

If your area had a boil-water notice, keep boiling tap water until officials lift it. If you're on a well and there was any flooding around the wellhead, treat the water as unsafe until the well has been checked and disinfected — your county health department or well company can guide you. Use your stored water in the meantime. Our water guide covers making water safe.

! After flooding, don't trust the well yet

Floodwater can contaminate a well. If water rose around your wellhead, use stored or boiled water and have the well tested and disinfected before drinking from the tap again.

Restarting appliances and electronics

A little care bringing things back keeps them working for years to come.

Reset clocks and timers, check that the fridge and freezer are cooling properly again, and restart electronics once the power's steady. If anything was plugged in during a surge and now won't work, unplug it and have it checked before forcing it. Reset any tripped breakers, and call an electrician if a breaker won't reset or you smell burning.

★ Electronics acting up after the storm?

If a computer, TV, or other device isn't right after the power came back, that's exactly the kind of thing I can look at. Call (330) 200-8042, or ask about \$49 on-screen help.

Powering down your backup safely

If you ran a generator or battery, wind it down in the right order.

Turn off and unplug your loads before shutting a generator down, rather than killing it under load, and let it cool fully before you touch, store, or refuel it. If you used a transfer switch or interlock, follow your electrician's steps to switch back to utility power. Store leftover fuel safely, and note the hours for maintenance. Our generator guides cover safe shutdown and storage.

! Let it cool before you refuel or store it

A hot generator and fresh fuel are a dangerous mix. Always let it cool fully before refueling, storing, or covering it.

Cleanup and lingering hazards

The storm's aftermath can hold dangers even in bright sunshine.

- Treat any downed power line as live and deadly — stay far away and report it.
- Watch for weakened tree limbs and storm debris underfoot.
- Be careful with any standing water, which can hide hazards.
- Never touch electrical equipment while standing in water.
- Leave chainsaw and roof work to those equipped for it, or a pro.

! Downed lines stay dangerous

A fallen wire can be live even after the storm passes. Keep everyone well away, don't touch anything it's touching, and report it to your utility.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Recovery looks the same everywhere, but longer rural outages mean more food to sort through and, sometimes, a well to check.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, power usually returns sooner, so recovery is often just a food check, a few resets, and restocking.

- Shorter outages mean less food to sort and toss.
- Stores reopen quickly for restocking the fridge and kit.
- City water is usually fine unless a notice says otherwise.
- Help and repair services are close if you need them.

If you are out in the country on a well

In the country, longer outages mean more food at stake and, after flooding, a well that may need testing before you trust it.

- A long outage may mean a full freezer to judge carefully.
- After flooding, have the well checked and disinfected.
- Restocking is a longer trip, so plan one thorough run.
- Check on neighbors as everyone recovers together.

★ Let's get you back to normal

Town or country, I'll help you recover safely — the food check, the resets, and restocking your kit. Call (330) 200-8042.

Documenting damage for insurance

If the storm caused damage, a little documentation makes a claim far smoother.

Photograph any damage to your home or belongings, and any food you had to throw out, before you clean up or discard it. Note what happened and when, keep receipts for any emergency purchases or repairs, and contact your insurance company to ask about your coverage. Our documents-and-cash guide covers being ready for a claim.

✓ Photograph before you clean up

Take pictures of damage and spoiled food before you toss anything. Those photos are what support an insurance claim — once it's cleaned up, the evidence is gone.

Restock your kit — the key after-storm habit

The most valuable recovery step is getting ready for next time.

You just used your kit, so refill it: replace the water, food, and batteries you used, recharge your power banks, restock any first-aid supplies and medicines, and note anything you wished you'd had. Doing this now, while the outage is fresh in your mind, is how each storm leaves you better prepared than the last.

✓ Restock while it's fresh in mind

Right after an outage, you know exactly what you ran short on. Restock and adjust your kit now, and you'll be even readier next time.

Check on people and pets after

Recovery is a good time to make sure everyone came through okay.

Check in with family and neighbors, especially older or unwell folks who rode out the storm alone, and make sure everyone's warm or cool, fed, and well. Look over your pets for any signs of stress or illness. A round of check-ins closes the loop on the outage and catches anyone who might still need a hand.

★ A round of check-ins after the storm

It's worth a call or a visit to older neighbors after a storm, just to be sure they're alright. If you'd like help arranging that, call (330) 200-8042.

Watch out for scams

After a storm, dishonest people prey on the recovery — stay sharp.

Be wary of unsolicited contractors, callers, or emailers offering repairs, insurance help, or aid, especially if they pressure you, demand cash up front, or ask for personal information. Verify anyone through an official number you look up yourself, get repair estimates in writing, and don't be rushed. Real help doesn't demand money on the spot or sensitive details out of the blue.

! Don't be rushed into paying

Storm-chasing scammers count on urgency. Slow down, verify, and get it in writing before you pay anyone or share personal information.

Health after the storm

A few health matters deserve attention as things return to normal.

If anyone ate food that may have been unsafe and feels ill, take it seriously and call a doctor if needed. Tend to any minor injuries from cleanup, and keep watching for carbon-monoxide symptoms if a generator or heater was in use. Restock medicines you ran low on, and get prescriptions refilled now that pharmacies are open.

! Take food-borne illness seriously

If someone becomes ill after eating food that may have spoiled, don't brush it off — especially the very young, older adults, or anyone unwell. Call a doctor if symptoms are severe or persistent.

A quick debrief: what worked, what to improve

The best time to improve your plan is right after using it.

- What worked well that you'd keep doing?
- What did you run short on or wish you'd had?
- Did any equipment fail or fall short?
- Did the family plan and check-ins work smoothly?
- What one change would help most next time?

✓ Jot down one thing to fix

You don't need a big review — just note the single biggest thing you'd change, and fix it while it's fresh. That's how your readiness grows storm by storm.

Restocking your food and supplies

Once the food-safety sorting is done, refill what you lost.

Make a grocery run to replace spoiled food and refill your pantry and outage stash. Clean the fridge and freezer if anything spoiled, using a mild cleaner to clear any odors. Restock the shelf-stable food you used from your kit, and top off water and batteries. A thorough restock now puts you right back to ready.

✓ Clean out spoilage promptly

If food spoiled, clean the fridge and freezer soon so odors don't set in. A wipe-down with a mild cleaner, and airing it out, usually does the trick.

Rest and emotional recovery

A storm and outage can be tiring and stressful — give yourself and your household time to recover.

Once the essentials are handled, rest. Storms wear people out, and a stressful outage can leave everyone — especially children and older adults — a little rattled. A return to normal routines, a good meal, and some reassurance help everyone settle. Be patient with yourself and each other as things get back to normal.

✓ Normal routines are soothing

Getting back to familiar routines — regular meals, sleep, and small comforts — helps a household recover from the stress of a storm. Take it gently.

Your get-back-to-normal steps

A short sequence to close out the outage well.

- ☐ Power restored gradually; clocks and electronics reset.
- ☐ Food checked; unsafe items thrown out; fridge cleaned.
- ☐ Water confirmed safe, or well checked after flooding.
- ☐ Backup power shut down and stored; fuel put away.
- ☐ Damage documented; insurance contacted if needed.
- ☐ Kit restocked; power banks recharged; medicines refilled.
- ☐ Everyone checked on; a quick debrief noted.
- ☐ A little rest, and back to normal routines.

★ Want a hand getting back to normal?

From checking electronics to restocking your kit, I'm glad to help you close out an outage. A first visit is a flat \$99. Call (330) 200-8042.

Your printable after-the-storm checklist

The whole recovery, in one place to keep.

- ☐ Bring power back gradually; reset clocks and electronics.
- ☐ Fridge safe ~4 hours; toss perishables warm over 4 hours at 40F+.
- ☐ Freezer food with ice crystals is safe to refreeze or cook.
- ☐ When in doubt, throw it out — never taste.
- ☐ Follow any boil notice; check a flooded well before drinking.
- ☐ Shut down and store backup power and fuel safely.
- ☐ Document damage; watch for scams; restock the kit.
- ☐ Check on everyone; note one thing to improve.

★ Recovering from a storm?

I'll help you check food and electronics, restock your kit, and get back to normal safely.
Call (330) 200-8042 — \$99 flat, or often \$49 on-screen.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about recovering after an outage.

Q: How do I know if my food is still safe after an outage?

In the fridge, throw out perishables held above 40 degrees for more than a couple of hours — it stays safe about four hours closed. In the freezer, food with ice crystals or at 40 degrees or below is safe to refreeze or cook. When in doubt, throw it out, and never taste to check.

Q: Should I turn everything back on at once when power returns?

No — power can return with a surge, and everything switching on at once can overload circuits. Bring major appliances and electronics back one at a time over a few minutes, and wait if the power seems unstable.

Q: Is my water safe after the storm?

Follow any boil-water notice until it's lifted. If you're on a well and there was flooding around the wellhead, treat the water as unsafe and use stored or boiled water until the well is checked and disinfected.

Q: What's the most important thing to do after an outage?

Two things: make the food-safety call correctly — when in doubt, throw it out — and restock your kit while the outage is fresh in mind, so you're even readier next time. Document any damage for insurance, too.

Q: How do I avoid scams after a storm?

Be wary of unsolicited contractors or callers offering repairs or aid, especially if they pressure you or want cash up front. Verify anyone through an official number you look up yourself, get estimates in writing, and don't be rushed into paying.

★ Let's finish the outage right

The after-storm steps matter as much as the prep. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you recover safely and get ready for next 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 recovering safely after a storm 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.

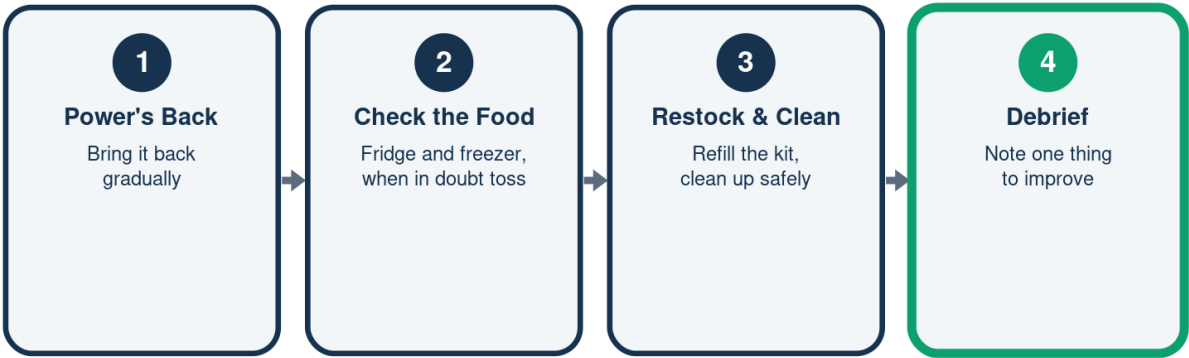
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

After the Storm

Recover safely, step by step



The danger doesn't end when the lights come back.

Keep It or Toss It

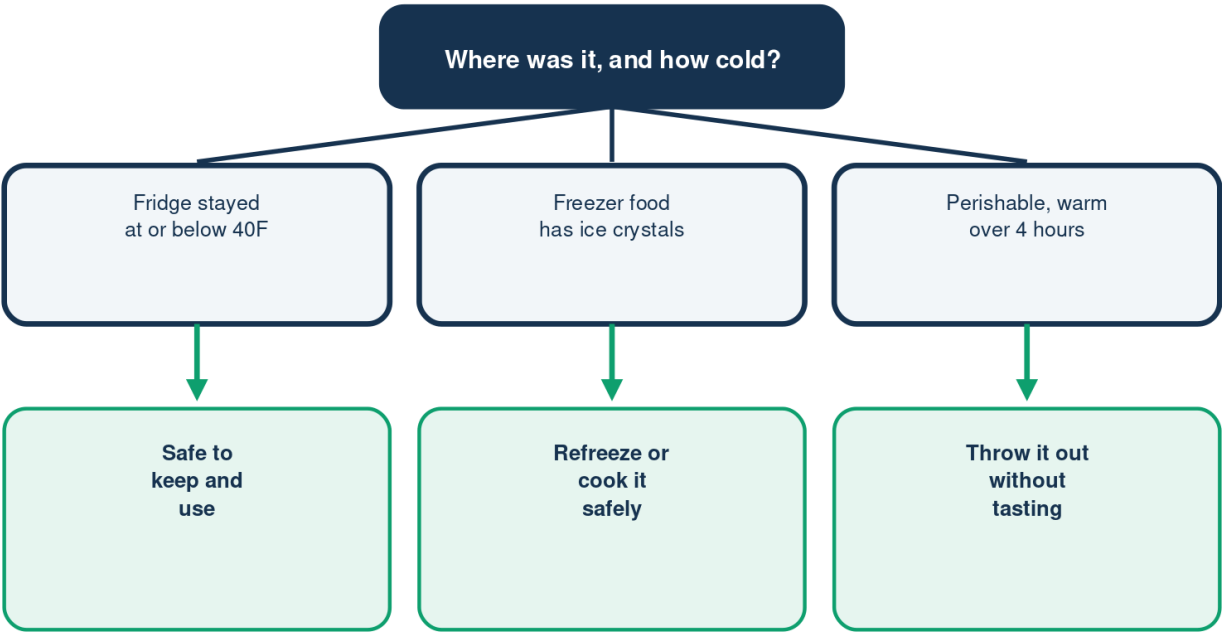
The food-safety rules the experts use

	Keep	Toss
Fridge	Cold, under 40F	Warm over 4 hours
Freezer	Still has ice crystals	Fully thawed, warm
Shelf-stable	Unopened is fine	n/a

When in doubt, throw it out — and never taste to check.

Is This Food Safe After the Outage?

Check before anyone eats it



After flooding, don't trust well water until it's checked.

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

After-Storm To-Dos

Close out the outage well

What to do	
Power	Bring back gradually
Water	Follow notices, check wells
Damage	Photograph for insurance
Kit	Restock while it's fresh
People	Check in, then rest

Restocking now makes each storm leave you readier.



Need a Real Person?

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— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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