



An Extended Guide · No. 1835

Your Before-the-Storm Checklist

Ready before the lights go out

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 calm before a storm is the safest time to get ready — so you're never scrambling in the dark or the wind once it hits.

Let's get ready before it hits

The single best time to prepare for an outage is the calm hours before the storm arrives. A little work now means you ride it out warm, fed, charged, and calm instead of scrambling in the dark.

I'm Bill, and this guide is your run-through for when a storm's in the forecast. It pulls together the 'before' steps from across our whole series into one clear checklist — charge up, fill water, ready the fridge, fuel up, secure the outside, and more.

None of it takes long, and nearly all of it is far easier on an ordinary afternoon than once the power's out. Let's walk through it so you know exactly what to do when you see that forecast.

★ Want a hand getting ready?

If you'd like help running through your before-the-storm prep, especially the first time, I'm glad to help. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

Before the storm, on one page

The essentials to do when a storm's coming.

- ☐ Charge every phone, power bank, and device to full.
- ☐ Fill water containers and freeze several jugs.
- ☐ Turn the fridge and freezer cold and group the food.
- ☐ Fill the car's tank and check any generator fuel.
- ☐ Secure or bring in loose items from the yard.
- ☐ Get some cash; ready documents and medicines.
- ☐ Check the kit, place flashlights, refresh the family plan.
- ☐ Know your water, gas, and electric shutoffs.

✓ Do the whole list while you still have power

Every step here is easier with the lights on. When a serious forecast lands, work through it before the power can go out.

Two kinds of getting ready

Good preparation happens on two timelines — long before, and just before.

Some readiness is season-long: having a kit, a stocked pantry, tested backup power, and a family plan already in place. That's the work our other guides help you do on calm days. Then there's the just-before work: the day or two when a storm is in the forecast and you top things off and secure the house.

This guide is mostly about that second kind — the last day or two — but it works best when the season-long readiness is already there. If it isn't yet, our home-outage-kit guide is the place to start.

✓ The easy prep is the prep you did early

The more you've done on calm days, the less there is to scramble for when a storm's coming. Season-long readiness makes the last-minute list short.

Charge everything up

Every full battery is stored power you'll be glad to have.

When a storm's in the forecast, plug in everything that holds a charge: phones, power banks, tablets, laptops, rechargeable lights, medical-device and hearing-aid batteries, and mobility equipment. A laptop can even charge a phone later. Our device-charging guide covers keeping everything alive through the outage itself.

✓ Plug in the moment you hear 'storm'

The best time to charge is while you still have power. Start topping everything off as soon as a serious forecast lands.

Fill and freeze water

Half an hour of filling now can carry you for days.

Fill clean jugs and pitchers with drinking water, fill a clean bathtub for washing and flushing, and freeze several jugs of water — they keep the freezer cold and melt into drinking water later. If you're on a well, this is essential and must be done before the power goes, since the pump stops with it. Our water guide has the full plan.

! On a well, fill up before the power goes

A well pump stops the instant the power does. If you're on a well and a storm's coming, fill everything — jugs, pots, the bathtub — before it hits.

Ready the food and the fridge

A little fridge prep buys hours of safe, cold food.

Turn the fridge and freezer to their coldest settings so they start an outage as cold as possible, and fill freezer space with those frozen water jugs. Group food together so you open the doors less. Make sure you have a few days of no-cook food and a manual can opener. Our food-and-cooking guide covers keeping it all safe.

✓ Cold to start is cold that lasts

The colder your fridge and freezer are when the power quits, the longer they'll hold safe temperatures. Turning them down ahead is a free head start.

Fuel up the car and any generator

Fuel is hard to get once the power's out, so top off ahead.

Fill the car's gas tank, since stations run on electricity and may close. If you have a generator, make sure you have fresh, stabilized fuel stored safely outside the living space — our generator series covers fuel storage. A full tank also means more hours of charging and warmth or cooling from the car.

! Store fuel safely, outside the house

Keep gasoline in approved containers, outside the living space and away from any heat or flame. Never store fuel in the house or basement.

Secure things outside

High winds turn loose objects into hazards — put them away.

- Bring in or tie down patio furniture, grills, and decorations.
- Secure trash cans and anything that could blow around.
- Park the car where a tree or limb is less likely to fall on it.
- Bring outdoor pets and animals into shelter.
- Clear gutters and drains so water can flow away.

Any bigger jobs — trimming branches near the house or power lines — should have been done earlier in the season, and tree work near lines is always a job for a pro, never you.

✓ A quick yard sweep before the wind

Walk the yard and put away anything the wind could pick up. It protects your windows, your neighbors, and the loose items themselves.

Protect your electronics

Power surges when the electricity comes back can harm electronics — guard against them.

Consider unplugging sensitive electronics — computers, TVs, and the like — or using good surge protectors, since the return of power can bring a surge that damages them. Leave one light switched on so you'll know when power returns. Knowing your electronics are protected is one less worry during the outage.

✓ Leave one light on

Switch on a single lamp before you unplug the rest. When it glows again, you'll know the power is back — without walking the whole house.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The before-storm list is the same everywhere, but rural homes have a couple of extra must-dos before the power goes.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, outages tend to be shorter, so the before-storm list is mostly about comfort and convenience — though it's all still worth doing.

- Charge up, fill some water, and ready the fridge.
- A shorter expected outage means a lighter fuel and water reserve.
- Stores and help are close if you forgot something.
- Still secure the yard — wind doesn't spare town.

If you are out in the country on a well

In the country, the before-storm work carries more weight, since outages run longer and the well pump stops with the power.

- Fill all your water before the power goes — the pump will stop.
- Top off generator fuel and the car for a longer haul.
- Bring in or secure livestock and outdoor animals.
- Stock a few extra days, since a store run is a longer trip.

★ Let's build your before-storm routine

Town or country, I'll help you turn this into a quick routine you run whenever a storm's coming. Call (330) 200-8042.

Ready medicines and health needs

Health prep is near the top of any before-storm list.

Refill any prescriptions running low while the pharmacy's easy to reach, confirm a few days' supply of daily medicines, and ready a cooler and ice for anything that needs refrigeration. Charge medical devices and check the first-aid kit. Our first-aid and medical-device guides cover the health side in full.

✓ Refill before, not during

The pharmacy is easy on a calm day and hard to reach in a storm. Top off prescriptions the moment a big storm's in the forecast.

Get backup power ready and tested

If you have backup power, now's the time to make sure it's ready.

Confirm a generator has fresh fuel and starts, or that a battery station is fully charged. Know where your cords, hookup, and safety gear are, and remember the outdoor-only rule for any generator. Our power-options and generator guides cover safe setup and use — don't learn it for the first time in the dark.

! Never run a generator indoors

When you ready a generator, remember it lives outdoors only, well away from the house, exhaust pointed away. Get it set up and tested safely before you need it.

Check the kit and place the lights

Make sure your supplies are stocked and your lights are where you'll want them.

Give your outage kit a quick check — water, food, batteries, first-aid — and set flashlights and lanterns where you'll reach for them: nightstands, the kitchen, by the doors. Confirm your weather radio works. Our home-outage-kit and lighting guides cover both, but a quick pre-storm check is always worth it.

✓ Put a light on every nightstand

Before the storm, set a working flashlight on each nightstand and a lantern in the main room. Then the first dark moment is calm, not a fumble.

Refresh the family plan

A quick reminder keeps everyone on the same page.

Remind the household of your communication plan — the out-of-town contact, the meeting places, check-in times — and make sure everyone has a current contact card and a charged phone. Confirm who's checking on extended family and neighbors. Our communication guide covers the whole plan.

✓ A two-minute pre-storm huddle

A quick reminder of who to text and where to meet sets the family plan fresh in everyone's mind before the storm arrives.

Ready the vulnerable, the kids, and the pets

Make sure everyone under your roof — and every animal — is covered.

Check on older or unwell family members and their needs, ready the kids with comfort items and the plan, and get the pets set with food, water, and a safe spot. Bring outdoor animals in. Our senior, pets, and medical-device guides go deeper on each. The before-storm hour is when you make sure no one's overlooked.

★ Let's make sure no one's forgotten

It's easy to overlook someone's specific need in the rush. I'm glad to help you build a before-storm routine that covers everyone. Call (330) 200-8042.

Keep an eye on the forecast

Staying informed shapes how much and how fast you prepare.

Follow the forecast on your weather radio, phone, or local news, and note any watches or warnings — a watch says get ready, a warning says act. Knowing whether you're facing a quick thunderstorm or a multi-day ice storm tells you how deeply to prepare. Our weather-radio guide covers staying informed.

✓ Let the forecast set your pace

A passing storm needs a quick charge-and-secure; a major system needs the full list and a deeper reserve. Match your prep to what's coming.

Know your shutoffs

Before a storm is the time to find your main shutoffs — not during an emergency.

- The main water shutoff, in case a pipe bursts.
- The electrical panel and main breaker.
- The gas shutoff, and how to use it — but only if you smell gas or are told to.
- How to safely switch to backup power, if you have it.

! If you ever smell gas, leave and call for help

Know where the gas shutoff is, but if you smell gas, don't investigate — leave right away and call your gas company or 911 from outside. Never flip switches or light anything.

Decide: stay put or prepare to go

Most storms you ride out at home — but be ready to leave if it comes to that.

For most outages, sheltering at home with your kit is the plan. But if there's any chance of evacuation — flooding, a dangerous forecast, an order — make sure your go-bags are ready and the car's fueled, and know where you'd go. Our evacuation-bag guide covers leaving quickly and safely. Deciding your triggers ahead of time makes the choice easy.

✓ Ready to stay, ready to go

Preparing to shelter and preparing to leave aren't opposites — a good before-storm routine sets you up for either, so you can choose calmly when the time comes.

The final hour before it hits

As the storm closes in, a last quick pass ties it all together.

- ☐ Everything charged and topped off.
- ☐ Water filled, fridge cold, food ready.
- ☐ Yard secured and car parked safely.
- ☐ Flashlights placed and the kit within reach.
- ☐ One light left on to signal when power returns.
- ☐ Everyone — people and pets — gathered and settled.

✓ Then settle in

Once the list is done, there's nothing to do but settle in comfortably and let the storm pass. That calm is exactly what the preparation buys you.

Your printable before-the-storm checklist

The whole before-storm routine, in one place to keep.

- ☐ Charge phones, power banks, devices, and medical equipment.
- ☐ Fill drinking water, fill the tub, and freeze jugs.
- ☐ Fridge and freezer cold; a few days of no-cook food ready.
- ☐ Car tank full; generator fuel fresh and safely stored.
- ☐ Yard secured; car parked safely; pets brought in.
- ☐ Cash, documents, medicines, and go-bags ready.
- ☐ Kit checked, flashlights placed, weather radio working.
- ☐ Shutoffs known; family plan refreshed; one light left on.

★ Want help building your routine?

I'll help you turn this into a quick before-storm routine that fits your home. A first visit is a flat \$99. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about getting ready.

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

Charge everything and fill water while you still have power, and — if you're on a well — fill all your water before the pump stops. Then ready the fridge, fuel up, and secure the yard. All of it is easier with the lights on.

Q: How far ahead should I start preparing?

Season-long readiness — a kit, a plan, tested backup power — should already be in place. When a storm's forecast, do the just-before steps over the day or two before it arrives, and finish before the power can go out.

Q: What should I do with my fridge and freezer?

Turn them to their coldest settings so they start the outage as cold as possible, fill freezer space with frozen water jugs, and group food so you open the doors less. Cold to start is cold that lasts.

Q: Should I unplug my electronics?

It's wise to unplug sensitive electronics or use good surge protectors, since power returning can bring a surge that damages them. Leave one light switched on so you'll know when the power comes back.

Q: How do I know how much to prepare?

Let the forecast guide you: a passing thunderstorm needs a quick charge-and-secure, while a major ice storm needs the full list and a deeper reserve. A watch says get ready; a warning says act now.

★ Let's make getting ready easy

A good before-storm routine takes the panic out of a forecast. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you build one that fits your home.

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 ready before 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

Before the Storm

Get ready while you still have power



Every step is easier with the lights still on.

Your Before-Storm Checklist

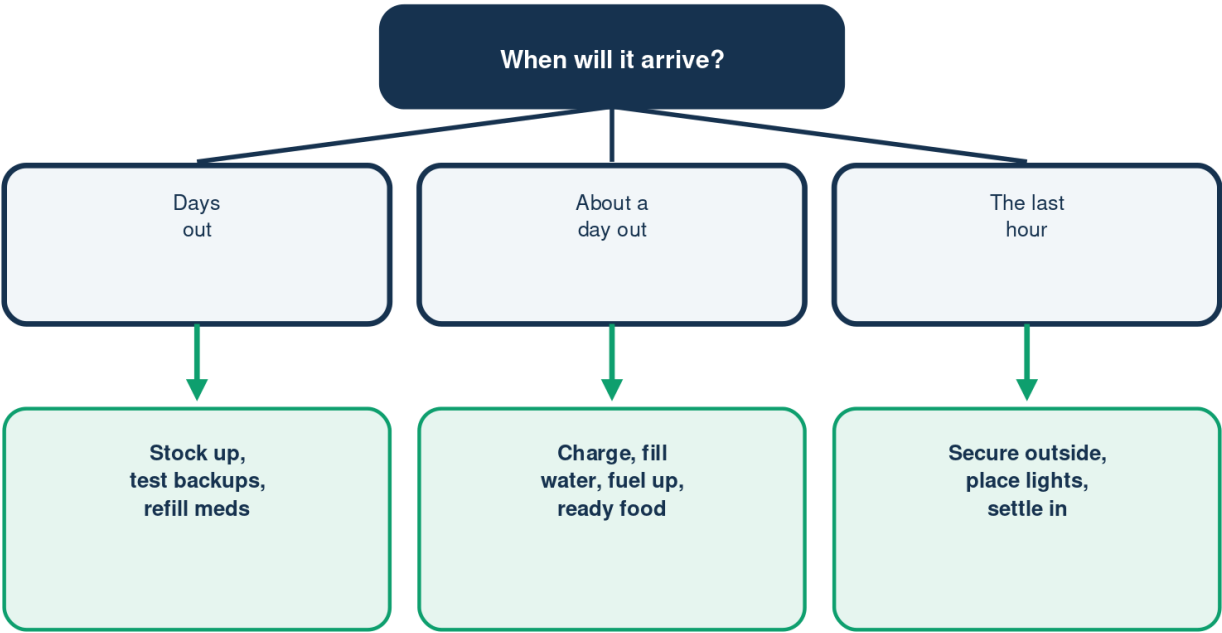
The categories to cover

The short version	
Power	Charge everything full
Water	Fill and freeze
Food	Cold fridge, no-cook meals
Fuel	Car and generator
Outside	Secure the yard, park safely
Papers	Cash, documents, medicines

Do the whole list before the power can go out.

How Much Time Before It Hits?

Match your prep to the clock



On a well, fill all your water before the power can go out.

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

Season-Long vs. Last-Minute

Two timelines of getting ready

	Season-long	Last-minute
Supplies	Build the kit	Top off water, food
Power	Set up backup	Charge and fuel
Plan	Make the family plan	Refresh and remind

The more you do early, the shorter the last-minute list.



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You just have to remember you can call.
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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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