



An Extended Guide · No. 1825

# Heating Your Home Safely Without Power

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Warm and safe, never one  
at the cost of the other

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**! Read this first — never run anything that burns fuel indoors**

Anything that burns fuel — a generator, a grill, a camp stove, a charcoal chimney, or a car engine — gives off carbon monoxide, an invisible, odorless gas that can kill in minutes. Never run any of them indoors, in a garage, in a shed, in a basement, or on a porch, not even with the door open and a fan going. A generator belongs outside only, well away from the house — the safety agencies say at least 20 feet — with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent. Put battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on every level and outside the bedrooms, and test them. If an alarm sounds, or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone into fresh air first and ask questions later. Heating is where this danger bites hardest: never heat a home with an oven, a grill, charcoal, or any camp or fuel device not truly made and rated for indoor use.

## Let's keep warm the safe way

A winter outage in Ohio can turn a house cold in a hurry. Staying warm is important — but doing it safely is what this guide is really about, because the wrong heat source is far more dangerous than the cold.

I'm Bill, and every winter I worry about folks getting so cold they reach for something dangerous — a gas oven left open, a grill dragged inside, an unvented heater run in a closed room. Those choices cause fires and carbon-monoxide poisoning. There are much safer ways to stay warm, and we'll walk through all of them.

We'll cover the one-warm-room approach, layering up, the heat sources that are safe indoors, protecting your pipes, and watching out for the vulnerable. Warmth and safety, together.

**★ Let's plan your winter warmth**

If you'd like help thinking through how you'd stay warm safely in a winter outage, I'm glad to help. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

## Staying warm safely, on one page

The essentials, if you remember nothing else.

- ❑ Close off and heat one room instead of the whole house.
- ❑ Layer up and pile on blankets — warm the body, not just the air.
- ❑ Only heat with sources truly rated safe for indoor use.
- ❑ Never heat with an oven, grill, charcoal, or camp stove.
- ❑ Keep space heaters three feet from anything that can burn.
- ❑ Never run any fuel heater while everyone sleeps.
- ❑ Keep a carbon-monoxide alarm working wherever you're heating.
- ❑ Let faucets drip and open cabinets to protect pipes.

### ✓ Warm the person, then the room

Blankets, layers, and a hat do more than most heaters, safely. Start there, and use safe heat to warm one small space.

## The one-warm-room strategy

Don't try to heat the whole house. Pick one room and make it cozy.

Choose a smaller interior room, ideally one that gets sun or is easy to warm, and gather the household there. Close its door and the doors to unused rooms, and hang a blanket over a drafty doorway if needed. A small space holds warmth far better than a big cold house.

Bring in what you need — blankets, water, light, the weather radio — so you can stay put. Body heat from several people in one room adds up more than you'd think.

### ✓ Smaller is warmer

A closed-off bedroom or den warms up and holds heat with a fraction of the effort of the whole house. Pick one room and settle in.

## Layering: your first and safest heat

The warmth you wear needs no fuel, no power, and no caution.

- Wear several thin layers rather than one thick one.
- Keep a hat on — a lot of heat escapes from the head.
- Warm socks and slippers keep the whole body warmer.
- Wrap up in blankets, and share a couch under a big one.
- A sleeping bag or two adds serious warmth for the night.
- Move around now and then to keep the blood flowing.

Dressing warmly and bundling up is genuinely effective, and it's the one heat strategy with no downside. Make it the foundation, and lean on safe heat sources only as much as you need.

### ✓ A hat indoors makes a real difference

It feels funny to wear a hat inside, but it keeps you noticeably warmer. In a cold house, dress as if you're going out.

## Heat sources that are safe indoors

A short list, used carefully, covers most homes.

The safe options are: a fireplace or wood stove that's sound, clean, and properly vented; a heater specifically rated and labeled for indoor use, run exactly per its instructions with ventilation and a CO alarm; and, when the power's on, an electric space heater used with care. Body heat and layers round it out.

Notice the theme: anything that burns fuel indoors must be built and rated for that, and vented. If you're ever unsure whether a heater is safe for indoor use, treat it as if it isn't.

### ✓ When unsure, treat it as unsafe

If you can't clearly confirm a heater is made and rated for indoor use, don't run it inside. That single habit prevents the worst outcomes.

## Heat sources to never use indoors

These cause fires and carbon-monoxide poisoning every winter. None of them, ever.

- A gas oven or stovetop, used to heat a room — fire and CO risk.
- A grill, charcoal, or camp stove indoors or in the garage.
- A generator anywhere but well outside the house.
- Any fuel heater not clearly rated and labeled for indoor use.
- Any heater left running while everyone is asleep.

It's tempting when a house is cold to reach for whatever makes heat. But an oven or a grill indoors can fill a home with carbon monoxide and start a fire. There is always a safer choice — layers, one warm room, and a properly rated heat source.

### **! Never heat with an oven or a grill**

A gas oven left open for heat, or a grill brought inside, is a deadly mistake. They give off carbon monoxide and are a serious fire hazard. Never do it, not even briefly.

## Using a fireplace or wood stove safely

For many Ohio homes, a wood stove or fireplace is the heart of a winter outage — when it's used right.

If yours is sound and the chimney is clean and maintained, it's a wonderful source of heat. Make sure the damper is open so smoke and carbon monoxide go up the chimney, use a screen to catch sparks, and burn only clean, dry, seasoned wood — never trash, treated lumber, or anything that gives off toxic smoke.

Keep a carbon-monoxide alarm and a smoke alarm working nearby, keep flammable things well back from the hearth, and never leave a fire unattended or burning as everyone sleeps — bank it down safely first.

### **! A clean, open chimney is essential**

A blocked or dirty chimney can push smoke and carbon monoxide back into the room, and creosote buildup can catch fire. Have the chimney serviced before you rely on the fireplace.

## Space heaters, used with care

A space heater can warm a room — but heaters are a leading cause of winter fires, so use them carefully.

An electric space heater only works while the power's on, but it may help before or after an outage, or if you have backup power. Keep it at least three feet from anything that can burn — bedding, curtains, furniture, people — plug it straight into the wall rather than a power strip, set it on a hard level surface, and never leave it running unattended or overnight.

A fuel-burning portable heater should be used indoors only if it is clearly rated and labeled for that, run exactly per its instructions, with ventilation and a CO alarm — and never while anyone sleeps. When in doubt, keep fuel heaters outside your living space.

### **! Three feet of space, and never while sleeping**

Give any heater at least three feet of clearance from anything that can burn, and turn it off before everyone sleeps or leaves the room. Most heater fires start from something too close or left running.

## Keeping your pipes from freezing

A cold house risks frozen pipes — and a burst pipe is a mess you don't want on top of an outage.

- Keep at least a little heat in the house if you safely can.
- Let faucets drip slightly — moving water resists freezing.
- Open cabinet doors under sinks to let warm air reach the pipes.
- Know where your main water shutoff is, in case a pipe bursts.
- Pay special attention to pipes along outside walls.

If you'll be away or the house will get very cold, consider draining the system — but for most short outages, a drip and a little warmth carry you through. Knowing your main shutoff means a burst pipe becomes a manageable problem, not a flood.

### ✓ Find your main shutoff now

Locate your main water shutoff on a calm day and make sure it turns. If a pipe ever bursts, shutting the water fast saves a world of damage.

## Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Staying warm safely works the same everywhere, but the country tends to get colder, stay out longer, and lean on wood and propane heat.

### If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, outages are often shorter and homes are closer together, so a warm-room plan and good layers usually see you through comfortably.

- Shorter outages mean the house won't get as deeply cold.
- A warming center or a relative's home is usually close by.
- Homes hold some warmth from neighbors on both sides.
- Electric heat may return quickly once power's restored.

### If you are out in the country on a well

In the country, cold snaps bite harder and last longer, and wood or propane heat is common — so safe use of those really matters.

- Plan for a longer, colder stretch — deeper blankets and fuel.
- A wood stove is a real asset; keep the chimney clean and a CO alarm near.
- Propane appliances must be rated and vented for indoor use.
- Getting to a warming center may be a longer trip in bad roads.

#### ★ Let's plan safe warmth for your home

Whether you heat with electric, wood, or propane, I'll help you make a safe cold-weather plan. Call (330) 200-8042.

## Watching out for those most at risk

Cold is hardest on the very old, the very young, and the unwell — keep a close eye on them.

Older adults and infants lose heat faster and may not feel or say how cold they are, so check on them often. Learn the signs of hypothermia — shivering, drowsiness, confusion, slurred speech, cold skin, or clumsiness — and in a baby, cold skin, very low energy, or a weak cry. If you suspect it, warm the person gently and call for help.

Keep the vulnerable in the warm room, well wrapped, with warm drinks if they can take them. Don't wait to seek help if someone seems to be getting dangerously cold.

### **! Hypothermia is a medical emergency**

If someone is confused, very drowsy, or their skin is cold and they've stopped shivering, warm them gently and call 911. This is serious and can come on quietly.

## Setting up your warm room

A little setup turns one room into a comfortable home base.

- ❑ Choose a small room and close its door and the unused rooms.
- ❑ Block drafts with blankets or towels along doors and windows.
- ❑ Bring in blankets, sleeping bags, and warm clothes.
- ❑ Keep light, water, and the weather radio in the room.
- ❑ Set up any safe heat source with proper clearances.
- ❑ Keep a working CO alarm in or near the room.

### ✓ Make it the family's den

Gather everyone — and the pets — into the one warm room. Together, with blankets and a little safe heat, it stays cozy far longer than a scattered household.

## Keeping pets warm, too

Your animals feel the cold as well, and belong in the warm room with you.

Bring pets into the warm room, give them a cozy bed or blanket off the cold floor, and keep their water from freezing. Small pets and short-haired animals feel cold quickly. Our pets guide covers keeping animals safe and calm through an outage in more detail.

### ✓ Off the cold floor

A pet bed or a folded blanket keeps an animal off the chilly floor and much warmer. They'll happily curl up wherever the people are.

## Blankets, bags, and emergency warmth

A good stock of warm bedding is the safest heat money can buy.

Keep plenty of warm blankets, and consider a sleeping bag or two rated for cold, which trap body heat wonderfully. Compact emergency blankets — the shiny foil kind — fold small and reflect body heat, so a few in the kit take almost no room. None of these can start a fire or make carbon monoxide, which is exactly why they're so valuable.

### ✓ Sleeping bags beat cold nights

A cold-rated sleeping bag keeps a person warm through the night with no heat source at all. For a winter outage, it's one of the best things in the kit.

## Warm food and drink help from the inside

A hot meal or drink warms you up and lifts the spirits.

If you can safely heat water or food outdoors — on a grill or camp stove, never inside — a warm drink or a bowl of soup does wonders on a cold night. Staying fed and hydrated helps your body make its own heat. Our food-and-cooking guide covers safe outdoor cooking and no-cook meals.

### ✓ Keep drinking, even when it's cold

It's easy to forget to drink water when you're not hot, but staying hydrated helps your body stay warm. Keep sipping through a cold outage.

## When it's too cold to stay

Sometimes the safest choice is to go somewhere with heat — and that's fine.

If your home is getting dangerously cold and you can't keep it safely warm — especially with older adults, infants, or anyone unwell in the house — plan to relocate to a warming center, a relative's home, or another safe place with heat. Know your options before you need them, and don't tough it out to the point of risk.

### ★ There's no shame in leaving

Going to a warm place isn't giving up — it's the smart, safe move when a house can't stay warm. If you'd like help planning where you'd go, call (330) 200-8042.

## Fire safety while you're heating

Heating and fire risk go together, so a few habits keep you safe.

- Keep anything that can burn well away from any heat source.
- Never leave a fire, candle, or heater unattended.
- Turn off heaters before sleeping or leaving the room.
- Keep working smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms nearby.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy and know how to use it.

### **! Working alarms, every time you heat**

Whenever you're using any heat source in an outage, make sure your smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms are working. They're your early warning if something goes wrong.

## Staying warm for very little

The safest warmth is also the cheapest.

Blankets, warm clothes you already own, a hat, and the one-warm-room approach cost nothing and keep you safe. A couple of cold-rated sleeping bags and some emergency foil blankets are inexpensive additions that punch well above their weight. You don't need to buy a heater to stay warm safely.

### ✓ **Gather blankets before you buy anything**

Round up the warm bedding you already own into the warm room. It's free, it's safe, and it's most of what you need.

## Your before-a-winter-storm heating steps

When a cold storm's coming, a little prep keeps you warm and safe.

- ☐ Pick and ready your warm room, with blankets gathered.
- ☐ Confirm any wood stove or fireplace and its chimney are ready.
- ☐ Check carbon-monoxide and smoke alarms are working.
- ☐ Set faucets to drip and locate your main water shutoff.
- ☐ Charge devices and ready warm clothes and sleeping bags.
- ☐ Know where you'd go if it got too cold to stay.

### ✓ Warm the house before it hits

If you have warning, let the house get good and warm before the power goes — a warm house cools far more slowly than a cold one.

## Your printable safe-heating checklist

Everything for warmth without the danger, in one place.

- ☐ A one-warm-room plan, with a room chosen and drafts blocked.
- ☐ Plenty of blankets, warm clothes, and cold-rated sleeping bags.
- ☐ Only heat sources rated safe for indoor use.
- ☐ No oven, grill, charcoal, or unvented burning indoors — ever.
- ☐ Space heaters three feet clear, off while sleeping.
- ☐ A clean, open chimney if you use a fireplace or wood stove.
- ☐ Working smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms where you heat.
- ☐ Dripping faucets and a known main water shutoff.

### ★ Want help planning safe warmth?

I'll help you set up a warm-room plan and make sure your heat sources are safe. A first visit is a flat \$99. Call (330) 200-8042.

## Common Questions

The heating questions I hear most in winter.

### **Q: Can I use my gas oven to heat the house in an outage?**

No — never. A gas oven or stovetop used for heat is both a fire hazard and a source of carbon monoxide. Use layers, one warm room, and a heat source that's truly rated for indoor use instead.

### **Q: What's the safest way to stay warm without power?**

Close off and heat one small room, layer up with warm clothes and blankets, and use only heat sources rated safe for indoor use. Body heat, sleeping bags, and a hat do more than most people expect.

### **Q: Is it safe to use a portable propane or kerosene heater indoors?**

Only if it's clearly rated and labeled for indoor use, run exactly per its instructions with ventilation and a working CO alarm, and never while anyone sleeps. If you can't confirm it's rated for indoor use, keep it outside.

### **Q: How do I keep my pipes from freezing?**

Keep a little heat in the house if you safely can, let faucets drip, open cabinet doors so warm air reaches the pipes, and know where your main water shutoff is in case one bursts.

### **Q: When should I leave for somewhere warm?**

If your home is getting dangerously cold and you can't keep it safely warm — especially with older adults, infants, or anyone unwell — plan to go to a warming center or a relative's. Know your options before you need them.

#### **★ Let's keep you warm and safe**

Staying warm without risking a fire or carbon monoxide takes a little planning. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you make a safe cold-weather plan.

## 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 heating your home safely in an outage 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

## Stay Warm Safely

Four steps to warmth without the danger



Warm the person first; use safe heat for one small space.

## Safe vs. Unsafe Heat

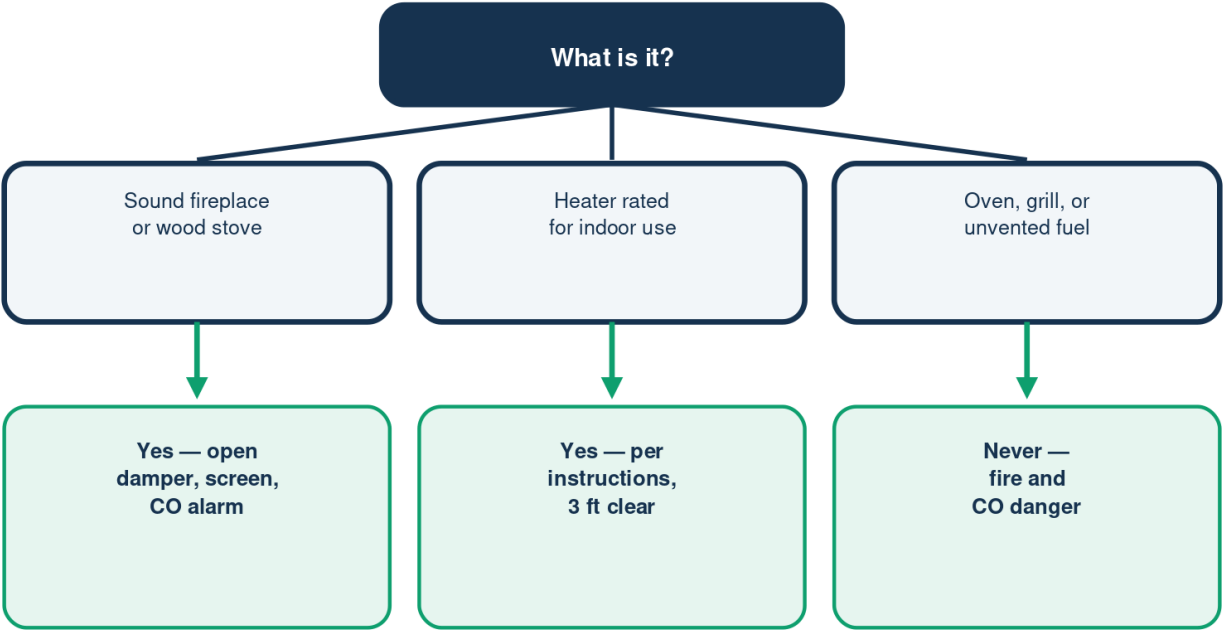
The line that keeps your home safe

|           | Safe indoors          | Never indoors         |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Wood heat | Sound, vented stove   | Grill or charcoal     |
| Heaters   | Rated for indoor use  | Camp or unvented fuel |
| The stove | n/a                   | A gas oven for heat   |
| No fuel   | Layers, sleeping bags | n/a                   |

If it burns fuel and isn't rated for indoors, keep it outside.

# Can I Use This to Heat?

Check before you light or plug in anything



Turn off any heater before everyone sleeps — no exceptions.

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

# Your Warm-Room Setup

Turn one room into a cozy home base

| What to do   |                            |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| Pick a room  | Small, close the door      |
| Block drafts | Blankets at doors, windows |
| Bring warmth | Blankets, bags, layers     |
| Stay safe    | A working CO alarm near    |

Gather everyone, and the pets, into the one warm room.



## Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.  
You just have to remember you can call.  
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

### BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will  
make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness,  
no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

**(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com**

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— Bill

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### 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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