



An Extended Guide · No. 1817

Building Your Home Outage Kit

The basics, gathered
before you need them

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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. This first guide is simply about gathering the basics into one place, calmly, before you ever need them.

Let's put together your outage kit

A home outage kit is nothing fancy — it's just the handful of ordinary things you'd want within reach when the power goes out, all gathered in one spot instead of scattered around the house.

I'm Bill, and after 30-plus years helping folks around Portage County, I can tell you the people who sail through an outage aren't the ones with the most gadgets. They're the ones who spent a quiet afternoon, once, putting a kit together — so when the lights flicker, they already know where the flashlight is.

This guide is the front door to our whole outage series. We'll walk through what belongs in a good kit, how to build it a little at a time without spending a fortune, and how to size it to your own home. Each piece — water, food, light, and the rest — has its own deeper guide to turn to when you want more.

★ You probably own most of this already

Don't picture an expensive shopping trip. Most of a good kit is things already in your house — they just need to live in one known spot. If you'd like a hand gathering yours, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole kit, on one page

If you remember only these categories, you've got the bones of a real kit.

- ❑ Water — about a gallon per person per day, for several days.
- ❑ Food — a few days of non-perishable food, and a manual can opener.
- ❑ Light — flashlights, a lantern or two, and spare batteries.
- ❑ Power — a charged power bank so a phone stays alive.
- ❑ Information — a battery or hand-crank NOAA weather radio.
- ❑ Health — a first-aid kit and a few days of any medicines.
- ❑ Comfort — warm blankets, and a plan for warmth or cooling.
- ❑ Papers and cash — copies of key documents and some small bills.

✓ Build it in stages, not in one afternoon

You do not have to buy everything at once. Start a bin this week with what you already own, and add a category each time you're at the store. A kit half-built beats no kit at all.

Why a kit beats a scramble

The value of a kit isn't really the stuff. It's not having to think when it's dark and the wind is up.

When the power goes out, the hard part is rarely any single item — it's hunting for the flashlight in a dark drawer, discovering the batteries are dead, and realizing the only water in the house is a half-empty pitcher. A kit turns all of that into one calm reach for one known place.

The safety agencies suggest being ready to get by on your own for several days, because after a big storm it can take a while for crews to reach everyone — longer the farther you are from town. A few days of the basics is a sensible target for most homes.

✓ Ready doesn't mean fearful

Putting a kit together isn't about expecting the worst. It's the same reason you keep a spare tire — so an ordinary bump in the road stays ordinary.

Start with water — it matters most

Of everything in your kit, water is the one thing you truly can't do without.

The standard guideline is about a gallon per person per day — half for drinking, half for washing and cooking — and a supply that covers several days. Don't forget a little extra for pets. Sealed, store-bought water is the simplest place to start and keeps the longest.

If you're on a private well, water deserves even more attention, because your pump stops the moment the power does. Our water guide goes deep on storing it, and on filling tubs and jugs when a storm is in the forecast.

! Don't wait for the storm to think about water

Stores sell out of bottled water fast when a storm is coming. A few gallons tucked in a closet now saves a frantic trip later.

Food you don't have to cook or chill

The trick with outage food is simple: pick things that need no refrigerator and, ideally, no stove.

Think canned soups, beans, vegetables, and fruit; peanut butter; crackers; nuts and dried fruit; shelf-stable meals; and a few treats. Choose foods your household actually likes and can eat without much fuss. Keep a manual can opener with the food — an electric one is useless in an outage.

Our food-and-cooking guide covers keeping the fridge and freezer cold, and safe ways to warm a meal when the stove is out. For the kit itself, lean on things that are fine eaten straight from the can or package.

✓ Shop your own pantry first

Set aside a few cans and boxes you already have, mark them as the outage stash, and simply replace them before they expire. That's a food kit, built for free.

Light to see by, power to stay reachable

Two of the most reassuring things in any kit: steady light and a phone that won't die.

Keep a few flashlights, a battery lantern or two for lighting a whole room, and a headlamp if you'll need your hands free. Store a good supply of the right batteries alongside them. A charged power bank keeps a phone alive for calls and information.

Our lighting guide compares flashlights, lanterns, and headlamps, and our device-charging guide covers power banks and stretching a phone's battery. Both explain why candles, while cozy, are a real fire risk in a dark, busy house.

! Flashlights, not candles

A knocked-over candle is one of the most common causes of house fires during outages. Battery light gives you the glow without the danger — keep candles as a distant backup, never the main plan.

A way to know what's going on

When the TV and internet are down, a simple radio becomes your window on the storm.

A battery-powered or hand-crank NOAA weather radio brings you official weather alerts and local news without any power at all. Many models also charge a phone from the hand crank in a pinch. Keep spare batteries with it, or give the crank a test now and then.

Our weather-radio guide walks through choosing one and setting it up, and our communication-plan guide covers keeping a written list of phone numbers so you're not stranded if your phone dies.

✓ Write down the numbers that matter

Most of us don't know a single phone number by heart anymore. A little card with family, your doctor, and the power company saves you when the phone that stores them all goes dark.

Health, warmth, and small comforts

The kit isn't only about getting by — it's about staying comfortable and well while you do.

Pack a first-aid kit and a few days' worth of any regular medicines, kept current. Add warm blankets and a change of warm clothes for a winter outage, and think through staying cool for a summer one. Toss in hand sanitizer, wet wipes, and a few garbage bags for basic sanitation if the water's off.

Our first-aid-and-medication guide covers a sensible kit and a medicine plan, and our heating and staying-cool guides cover riding out the temperature safely, without ever burning anything indoors.

★ Medicines deserve a plan of their own

If anyone in the house takes daily medicine — especially anything that needs refrigeration or a powered device — that's worth thinking through carefully. I'm glad to help; just call (330) 200-8042.

One container, one known home

A kit only works if everyone can find it in the dark.

A sturdy plastic tote with a lid keeps everything together, dry, and easy to carry. A duffel or backpack works too, and travels better if you ever have to leave. Pick a spot everyone in the house knows — a hall closet, the bottom of the pantry, a shelf by the door.

Keep a smaller grab-and-go bag as well, holding just the essentials, in case you ever need to leave in a hurry. Our evacuation-bag guide covers exactly what that smaller bag should hold.

✓ Tell the whole household where it lives

The best kit in the world doesn't help if only one person knows where it is. Walk everyone to it once, so it's common knowledge, not a secret.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The categories in a kit are the same everywhere. How much you stock, and how long it needs to last, is what changes with where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, outages tend to be shorter and help is closer, so a modest kit covers most of what you'll face comfortably.

- A few days of water and food is usually plenty for a typical outage.
- You can often restock quickly once stores and power return.
- Neighbors are close, which makes checking on each other easy.
- A smaller bin in a closet is generally enough room.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a well, plan for more. Power can stay out longer past the last mile of line, and when it does, your water stops too.

- Store more water than you think you'll need — the well pump won't run.
- Keep a deeper food supply, since a store run is a longer trip.
- Add a few practical spares: work gloves, a good flashlight, fuel if you run a generator, per our generator guides.
- Plan for a longer stretch on your own before help arrives.

★ Let's size a kit to your home

Whether you're in a tidy in-town house or a place down a long gravel drive, I'll help you build a kit that fits your household and your outages. Call (330) 200-8042.

Build it a little at a time

The surest way to never finish a kit is to treat it as one big project. So don't.

Start a bin this week with whatever you already own — a couple of flashlights, some canned food, a few jugs of water. That alone puts you ahead of most homes. Then add one category on each ordinary trip to the store, until the bin is full.

- Week one: the bin itself, plus water and any flashlights you own.
- Week two: a few days of non-perishable food and a manual can opener.
- Week three: batteries, a power bank, and a weather radio.
- Week four: first-aid, medicines, blankets, and your paper-and-cash pocket.

✓ Progress beats perfection

A kit that covers three of the categories is worlds better than a perfect kit you never quite start. Put something in the bin today.

The small things people always forget

These little items cost almost nothing and are sorely missed when they're not there.

- A manual can opener — the single most forgotten item in any kit.
- Cash in small bills, for when card readers are down.
- A spare pair of reading glasses, if you wear them.
- Any pet needs: food, water, a leash, medicines.
- A whistle, to signal for help without shouting.
- Work gloves and sturdy shoes, kept near the kit.
- Duct tape and a few garbage bags — endlessly useful.
- A backup phone charging cord that lives in the bin.

✓ Walk your own house looking for these

Most of these are already somewhere in your home. A ten-minute walk with the bin in hand rounds up nearly all of them.

How big should your kit be?

The right size depends on three simple things: how many people, how many days, and any special needs.

Start with the number of people in your home and multiply by the days you want to cover — several days is a sensible target for most. That sets your water and food. Then adjust up for anyone with medical needs, for pets, and for how long your outages tend to run.

Your situation	Lean toward
In town, short outages	A few days for each person
Rural or on a well	A longer supply, plus extra water
Medical needs at home	More margin, and a device backup plan
Pets in the house	Their own food, water, and supplies

✓ **When in doubt, round up on water**

Water is cheap, keeps well, and is the one thing you'll never regret having a little too much of.

Think about everyone under your roof

A good kit fits the actual people — and animals — who live in your home, not a generic family.

Take a slow look around. Is there a baby who needs formula and diapers? An older adult who tires easily or uses a device? Someone who depends on daily medicine? A dog or cat? Each one adds a few specific items that a one-size-fits-all list would miss.

Our senior-and-caregiver guide, our medical-device guide, and our pets guide each go deeper on planning for a particular person or animal. For the kit, just make sure nobody in the house is left off the list.

★ A second set of eyes helps

It's easy to overlook something obvious about your own household. I'm happy to walk through it with you and catch the gaps — that's what a visit is for. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

A pocket for papers and cash

When systems are down, a little cash and a few copies can save the day.

Tuck a folder or zip bag into the kit with copies of the documents you'd hate to be without — identification, insurance, a list of medicines, key phone numbers — and a modest amount of cash in small bills. Card readers and ATMs may not work when the power's out.

Our important-documents guide covers exactly what to copy and how to keep it safe and private. Keep sensitive papers sealed and out of sight, and only include what you'd genuinely need in a pinch.

! Keep private papers private

Copies of personal documents are useful, but they're also sensitive. Keep them in a sealed envelope inside the kit, not loose, and store the kit somewhere secure in your home.

A kit is a living thing — keep it fresh

The one way a kit fails you is by sitting untouched until the batteries are dead and the food's expired.

Twice a year — an easy trick is when the clocks change — open the bin and give it a look. Rotate the water and food, test the flashlights and radio, freshen the batteries, and check that medicines and documents are current.

Our kit-maintenance guide lays out a simple seasonal routine so this never becomes a chore. A few minutes twice a year keeps the whole kit ready to go.

✓ Tie it to something you already do

Pair the kit check with changing the clocks or the furnace filter. Hooking it to a habit you already have is how it actually gets done.

Don't forget a small kit for the car

Outages and storms don't only catch us at home.

A small kit in the trunk — water, a blanket, a flashlight, a phone cord, a little food, and basic first-aid — covers you if a storm strands you on the road or you lose power while away. Your car can also charge a phone in a pinch.

Our car-as-backup guide covers using the vehicle safely, including the firm rule never to run it in a closed garage. For now, just keep a few basics in the trunk so the car is part of your plan, too.

! Never idle the car in a closed garage

A car engine makes carbon monoxide just like a generator does. If you use the car to charge or warm up, it must be outside, never in an attached or closed garage.

Building a kit without spending much

A good kit is measured in usefulness, not dollars.

Nearly everything in a starter kit is either already in your house or inexpensive and long-lasting. Set aside pantry cans you already buy, reuse a tote you already own, and add a flashlight or a case of water when it's convenient. There's no need for anything fancy.

- Use food and water you already buy — just set some aside.
- Repurpose a bin, duffel, or backpack you already have.
- Add one modest item per store trip instead of a big haul.
- Skip gadgets you won't use; the basics carry the day.

✓ The best kit is the one you'll actually build

Don't let a long, expensive-looking list stop you. A humble bin with water, food, and a flashlight is a real kit. Start there.

A ten-minute walk through your own house

The fastest way to half-build a kit is to go gather what you already own.

Room	What to grab for the bin
Kitchen	Canned food, manual can opener, bottled water
Junk drawer	Flashlight, batteries, matches, a phone cord
Bathroom	First-aid supplies, a few days of medicine
Bedroom closet	Warm blankets, a change of warm clothes
Desk or files	Copies of key papers, some small bills

✓ **Fill the bin on the walk itself**

Carry the empty bin with you room to room. By the time you've made the loop, you'll be surprised how full it already is.

Your printable outage-kit checklist

Tick these off as you gather them. Half-checked is already a real kit.

- ☐ Water: about a gallon per person per day, several days' worth.
- ☐ Food: a few days of non-perishables, plus a manual can opener.
- ☐ Light: flashlights, a lantern, a headlamp, and spare batteries.
- ☐ Power: a charged power bank and a spare phone cord.
- ☐ Information: a battery or hand-crank NOAA weather radio.
- ☐ Health: a first-aid kit and a few days of any medicines.
- ☐ Comfort: warm blankets, warm clothes, sanitation supplies.
- ☐ Papers and cash: copies of key documents and small bills.
- ☐ Container: a labeled bin everyone in the house can find.

★ Want a hand building yours?

If you'd like company gathering all this and setting it up right, that's exactly what a visit is for. A first visit is a flat \$99. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about putting a kit together.

Q: How many days should my kit cover?

Several days is a sensible target for most homes. If you're rural, on a well, or far from stores, lean toward a longer supply, since outages there often run longer.

Q: Where's the best place to keep it?

Somewhere everyone in the house knows and can reach in the dark — a hall closet, the bottom of the pantry, or a shelf near the door. Keep a smaller grab-and-go bag too, in case you have to leave.

Q: Do I really need to buy anything special?

Rarely. Most of a good kit is ordinary things you already own, simply gathered in one place. A weather radio and a power bank are the two items most worth adding if you don't have them.

Q: How do I keep it from going stale?

Check it twice a year — an easy reminder is when the clocks change. Rotate water and food, test the lights and radio, and freshen the batteries. Our kit-maintenance guide has a simple routine.

Q: This feels like a lot — where do I start?

Start with water and a flashlight in a bin today, then add one category per store trip. A kit built in stages is still a kit, and you'll have the essentials covered within a month.

★ No question is too small

If any part of this leaves you unsure, that's exactly what I'm here for. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we'll sort it out together, at your pace.

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 building your outage kit 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.

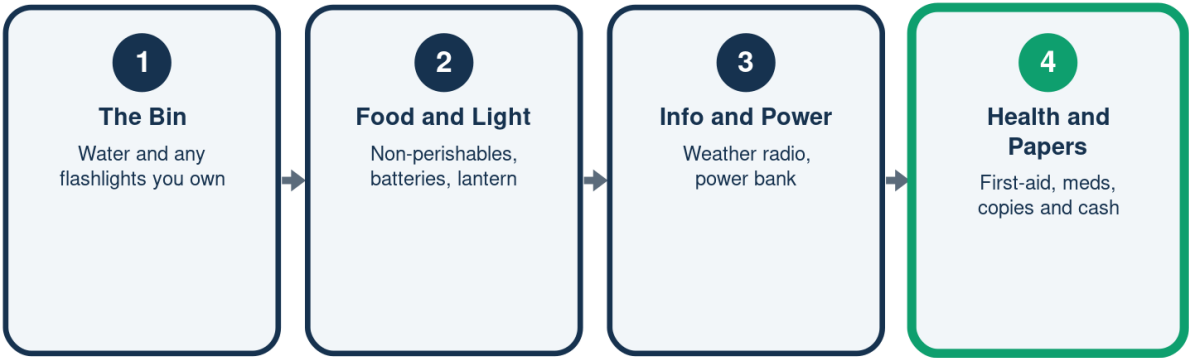
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

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Build Your Kit in Four Easy Steps

A little at a time, not all at once



Add one step on each ordinary trip to the store.

What Goes in the Bin

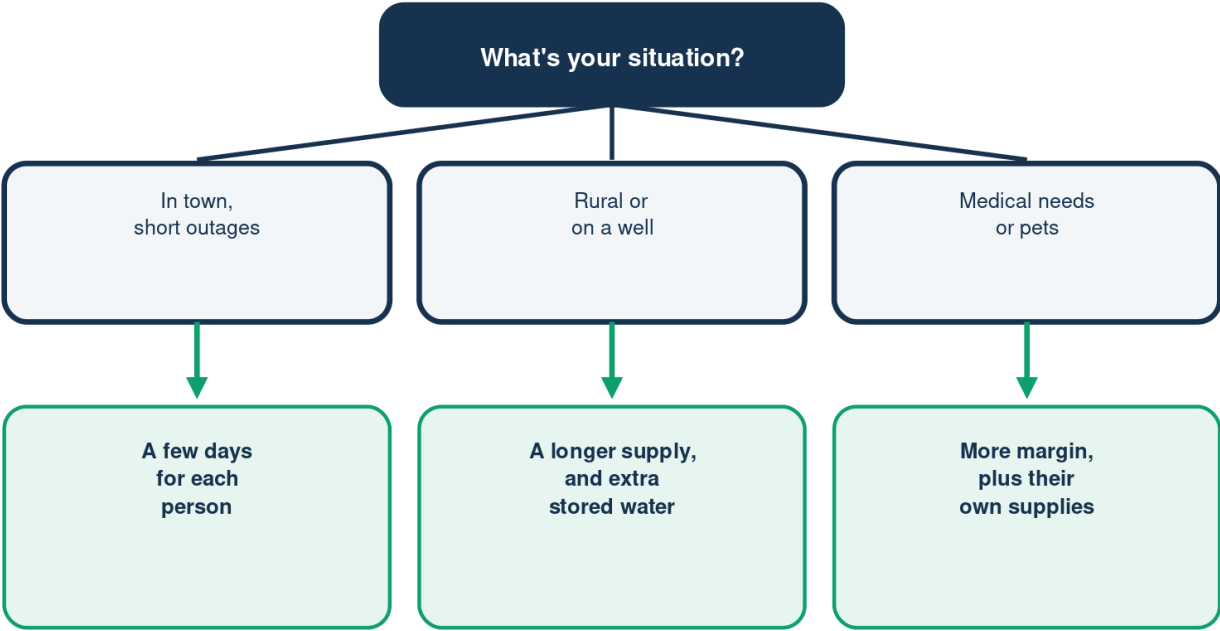
The seven building blocks of any home kit

The short version	
Water	A gallon per person, per day
Food	A few days, no cooking needed
Light	Flashlights, lantern,
Information	A NOAA weather radio
Health	First-aid and medicines
Papers and cash	Copies and small bills

You likely own most of this already.

How Big Should My Kit Be?

Match your home to a sensible size



When in doubt, round up on water — it's cheap and keeps well.

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

Keep It Fresh Twice a Year

An easy reminder: when the clocks change

What to do	
Water	Rotate to fresh
Food	Replace before it expires
Batteries	Test and freshen
Medicines	Check the dates
Lights and radio	Make sure they work

A few minutes twice a year keeps the whole kit ready.



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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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