



An Extended Guide · No. 1821

Keeping Phones and Devices Charged

Your lifeline, kept alive

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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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. One note for this guide: if you ever charge from your car, run it outside only — never idling in a closed or attached garage, where its exhaust can kill.

Let's keep your phone alive

In an outage, a charged phone is your lifeline — for news, for calls to family, and for reaching help. Keeping it alive is easier than you'd think with a little planning.

I'm Bill, and this guide covers the simple tools and habits that keep a phone (and a tablet, and a medical device battery) going through a long outage: a power bank kept charged, a few tricks to stretch a battery, and safe ways to top up from a car or generator.

You don't need to be a gadget person to get this right. A charged power bank in the kit and a couple of good habits cover almost every situation.

★ Phones can be fiddly — I'm glad to help

If charging, power banks, or battery settings feel confusing, that's exactly the sort of thing I sort out every day. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

Keeping devices charged, on one page

The essentials for a phone that won't die on you.

- ❑ Keep a power bank in your kit, and keep it charged.
- ❑ Charge everything fully the moment a storm is forecast.
- ❑ Turn on low-power mode and dim the screen to stretch a charge.
- ❑ Send texts instead of calls — they use less and get through more.
- ❑ Use airplane mode where there's no signal to save the battery.
- ❑ Your car can charge a phone — but only run it outdoors.
- ❑ Keep spare charging cords in the kit.
- ❑ Recharge your power banks every few months so they're ready.

✓ A charged power bank is the whole trick

If you do just one thing, keep a charged power bank in your kit. It's a pocket-sized outlet that keeps a phone going for days.

Why a charged phone matters so much

Your phone does a dozen jobs in an outage — keeping it alive keeps all of them available.

A working phone lets you get weather alerts and news, check on family and let them check on you, and call for help in an emergency. For many of us it's also where our medicine list, our contacts, and our important information live. A dead phone takes all of that away at once.

That's why charging isn't an afterthought — it's near the top of the list. A little planning means your phone is there when you truly need it, not blinking red at the worst moment.

✓ Keep it topped up as a habit

In storm season, get in the habit of keeping your phone above half charged. Starting an outage with a full battery buys you a lot of breathing room.

Power banks: an outlet in your pocket

A power bank is the single most useful charging tool for an outage.

It's a rechargeable battery in a small case that charges your phone with no wall outlet at all. You charge it up ahead of time, then it quietly refills your phone — often several times over — through the outage. Bigger banks hold more; a mid-size one keeps a phone going for days of careful use.

Keep one or two in your kit, always charged, with the right cord attached. For a household, a larger bank or a couple of smaller ones lets everyone stay reachable without fighting over a charge.

✓ Charged is the key word

A power bank only helps if it's charged. Top it off when you build your kit and whenever a storm is coming, and recharge it every few months so it never sits empty.

Charge everything before the storm

When a serious forecast lands, plug in everything that holds a charge.

- Charge every phone in the house to full.
- Charge your power banks completely.
- Top off tablets and laptops — a laptop can charge a phone too.
- Charge any medical-device batteries, per our medical-device guide.
- Charge rechargeable lights and your weather radio if it charges.

Every fully charged battery in the house is a little reservoir of power you'll be glad to have. A laptop, for instance, can charge a phone several times through its own USB port even when it's closed.

✓ Think of full batteries as stored power

Before an outage, every device topped to full is energy in the bank. Charge them all while you still have the wall outlets to do it.

Making a phone's charge last

A few simple settings can double or triple how long a charge lasts.

Turn on your phone's low-power or battery-saver mode, which trims background activity. Dim the screen, since the display is the biggest power drain. Close apps you're not using, and don't stream video or play games you don't need to.

Where there's little or no signal, switch on airplane mode — a phone hunting for a weak signal drains fast. Turn it back on now and then to check messages. And prefer texts to calls: they sip power and often get through when calls won't.

✓ The screen is the hungriest part

Dimming your screen and letting it sleep quickly saves more battery than almost anything else. Bright screens are what drain a phone fastest.

Charging from your car — safely

Your car is a big battery on wheels, and it can charge your phone — with one firm safety rule.

Most cars will charge a phone through a USB port or a plug-in adapter in the 12-volt socket. In a pinch, a car can also run a small amount of household gear through an inverter. It's a handy backup when your power banks run low.

But here's the rule that matters most: never run the car in a closed or attached garage. A running engine gives off carbon monoxide, just like a generator. Charge from the car outside, in the open air. Our car-as-backup guide covers this in full.

! Never idle the car in a closed garage

Carbon monoxide from a running engine can build up and kill quickly. If you use the car to charge, it must be outdoors, well away from open windows and doors — never in the garage.

Charging from a generator or battery station

If you have larger backup power, phones are the easiest thing it will ever run.

A generator or a portable battery power station can charge phones and devices easily. For delicate electronics, cleaner power is gentler — our power-options guide explains why an inverter generator or a battery station suits phones, laptops, and medical devices especially well. A battery station has the bonus of being safe to use indoors, since it makes no exhaust.

You don't need big power just to charge a phone, though — a power bank does that. Save the generator for the fridge and furnace, and let small batteries handle the phones.

✓ Small jobs for small batteries

Charging phones is a job for power banks, not a roaring generator. Keep the generator for the heavy loads and let a pocket battery keep everyone reachable.

Solar chargers for a long outage

When an outage stretches on and the sun's out, free power is nice to have.

A small folding solar charger or a solar-capable power bank can top up a phone from a sunny windowsill or porch. It's slow compared with a wall outlet, but in a multi-day outage it keeps trickling power in at no cost. Our power-options guide covers solar in more depth.

✓ Best as a slow, steady backup

Don't count on solar for a fast charge, but for a long outage it's a quiet, free way to keep a phone or a power bank from ever hitting empty.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Keeping devices charged looks similar everywhere, but signal and outage length can make it more of a challenge out in the country.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, cell signal is usually strong and outages shorter, so a charged phone and a power bank keep you comfortably connected.

- Strong signal means less battery lost hunting for a connection.
- Shorter outages rarely test your charging setup hard.
- A single good power bank often covers the whole event.
- Public places with power are close if you need a charge.

If you are out in the country on a well

In rural areas, signal can be weaker and outages longer, so charging and staying connected both take a little more planning.

- Keep more charging capacity — extra power banks or a solar option.
- Weak signal drains phones faster, so lean on airplane mode and texts.
- A car or generator becomes a valuable charging source over long outages.
- Know where around your property you get the best signal.

★ Let's get your charging sorted

Whether you're in town or down a country road, I'll help you set up power banks and settings so your phone stays alive. Call (330) 200-8042.

Staying in touch when signal is spotty

After a storm, networks can get busy or weak. A few tricks help your message get through.

- Send a text instead of calling — texts often get through when calls fail.
- If your home internet has backup power, wi-fi calling can work without cell signal.
- Try again in a few minutes if the network is jammed right after a storm.
- Find the spot in or around your home with the best signal, and use it.
- Keep messages short to save battery and get through faster.

✓ A text is your best bet

When everyone's trying to call at once after a storm, a short text is far more likely to reach family — and it barely touches your battery.

A backup way to make a call

It's worth having a second path to reach the outside world.

If you still have a corded landline phone (not a cordless one, which needs power), it may keep working in some outages when the phone lines stay up — a genuinely useful backup. An old cell phone kept charged can also call 911 even without active service.

Keep a written list of key phone numbers, too. If your smartphone dies, all those stored numbers go with it — but a little card in your wallet or kit keeps family and your doctor reachable from any phone.

✓ A corded phone is a quiet hero

One inexpensive corded phone, plugged into the wall jack, can keep working when everything cordless is dark. Worth keeping in a closet.

Devices that must stay powered

Some devices are far more than convenient — plan for them first.

Rechargeable hearing aids, a glucose monitor, a medication reminder, or any powered medical equipment deserve priority in your charging plan. Keep their batteries charged, keep approved spares, and know how you'll power them through a long outage.

Our medical-device guide goes deep on backup power for life-sustaining equipment. For everyday health devices, the rule is simple: charge them first, and keep spares ready.

★ Health devices come first

If someone in your home relies on a powered health device, let's make sure it's covered before anything else. Call (330) 200-8042 and we'll plan it together.

Conserving power as a household

A little coordination stretches everyone's batteries further.

Rather than everyone burning through their phones at once, pick one phone to keep on for news and calls, and let the others rest in low-power or airplane mode. Share a power bank on a rotation, and check in with family on a schedule instead of constantly.

✓ One phone on, the rest resting

Keeping a single phone active for the household — and the others powered down — means you always have a charged phone in reserve as the outage wears on.

Don't forget the cords and adapters

The best power bank in the world is useless without the right cord.

Keep spare charging cords in your kit that match every device you own, plus a car charging adapter. Cords fray and wander off, so a set that lives permanently in the kit means you're never caught without one. Check that they actually fit your current phones and devices.

✓ A kit cord that never leaves the kit

Buy a spare cord for each device just for the kit, and don't borrow from it for daily use. That way it's always there when the power isn't.

Keeping your power banks ready

A power bank slowly loses charge on the shelf — so give it a refresh now and then.

Recharge your power banks every few months so they're never sitting empty when a storm hits. Fold this into the same twice-a-year kit check where you test lights and rotate water. Replace any bank that no longer holds a charge well.

✓ Refresh at the clock changes

When you change the clocks and test your flashlights, top off your power banks too. A charged bank is only helpful if it's been kept charged.

Devices for keeping kids calm

A tablet with a downloaded movie can be a lifesaver on a long, dark evening — used sparingly.

Before a storm, download some shows, games, or audiobooks onto a tablet so children have entertainment that needs no internet. Use it in low-power mode and in moderation, so it doesn't drain the very batteries you may need for information and calls.

✓ Download ahead, ration during

Load up a tablet with offline entertainment before the storm, then dole it out. It keeps kids content without burning through your power reserves all at once.

A solid charging plan for very little

Staying charged doesn't take much money — just a bank and a couple of habits.

One good power bank, a spare cord or two, and a car charging adapter make a complete outage charging kit for very little. Add the free habits — low-power mode, dim screen, texts over calls — and you're well covered without spending much at all.

✓ Start with one power bank

If you buy just one thing, make it a decent power bank. Keep it charged, and it'll carry a phone through most outages on its own.

Your before-a-storm charging steps

A quick round of charging when the forecast turns serious.

- ☐ Charge every phone in the house to full.
- ☐ Fully charge all your power banks.
- ☐ Top off tablets, laptops, and rechargeable lights.
- ☐ Charge any medical-device or hearing-aid batteries.
- ☐ Confirm your charging cords and car adapter are in the kit.
- ☐ Download offline entertainment for the kids.

✓ Plug in the moment you hear 'storm'

The best time to charge is while you still have power. When a serious forecast lands, plug everything in right away.

Your printable charging checklist

Everything for a phone that stays alive, in one place.

- ☐ One or two power banks, kept charged, in the kit.
- ☐ Spare charging cords for every device, plus a car adapter.
- ☐ A habit of charging everything before a storm.
- ☐ Battery-saver settings you know how to turn on.
- ☐ A written list of key phone numbers, in case a phone dies.
- ☐ A corded landline or spare charged phone as a backup.
- ☐ Car charging only outdoors — never in a closed garage.
- ☐ Power banks recharged every few months.

★ Want help getting set up?

I'll help you choose a power bank, set up battery-saving on your phone, and make a simple charging plan. A first visit is a flat \$99, and many phone questions I can help with on-screen for \$49. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The charging questions I'm asked most.

Q: What's the best way to keep my phone charged in an outage?

A power bank kept charged is the simplest, most reliable answer — a pocket-sized battery that refills your phone with no outlet. Charge it ahead of time and it can keep a phone going for days.

Q: How do I make my phone's battery last longer?

Turn on low-power mode, dim the screen, close unused apps, and use airplane mode where there's no signal. Send texts instead of calls. The bright screen is the biggest drain, so keep it dim and let it sleep.

Q: Can I charge my phone from my car?

Yes, through a USB port or a 12-volt adapter — but only with the car outdoors. Never run the engine in a closed or attached garage; its exhaust contains deadly carbon monoxide.

Q: Do I need a generator just to charge my phone?

No — a power bank handles that easily. Save a generator or battery station for heavy loads like the fridge and furnace, and let small batteries keep the phones going.

Q: What if my smartphone dies and I lose my contacts?

Keep a written list of key phone numbers in your wallet or kit. Then you can reach family and your doctor from any phone — a borrowed one, a corded landline, or a spare charged phone.

★ Phones are my bread and butter

Charging, settings, power banks — this is exactly what I help folks with every day. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we'll make it simple.

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 keeping your phone and devices charged 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.

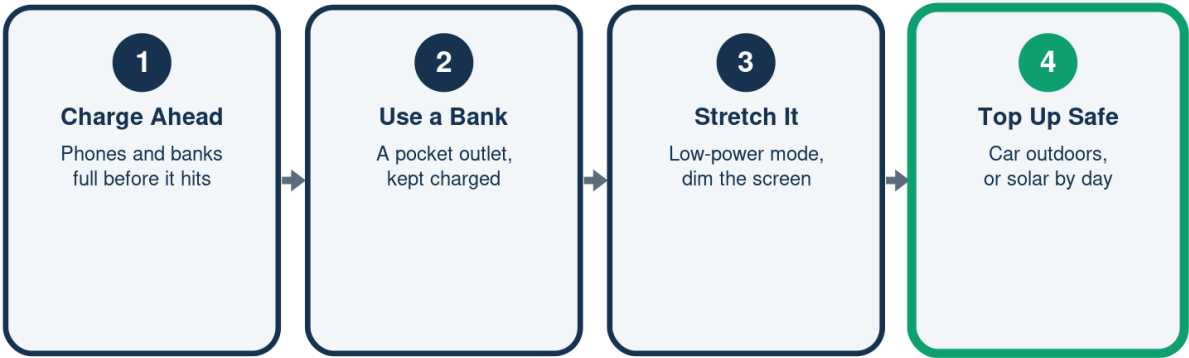
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

Keep a Phone Alive

Four steps to staying connected



A charged power bank does most of the work on its own.

Ways to Charge in an Outage

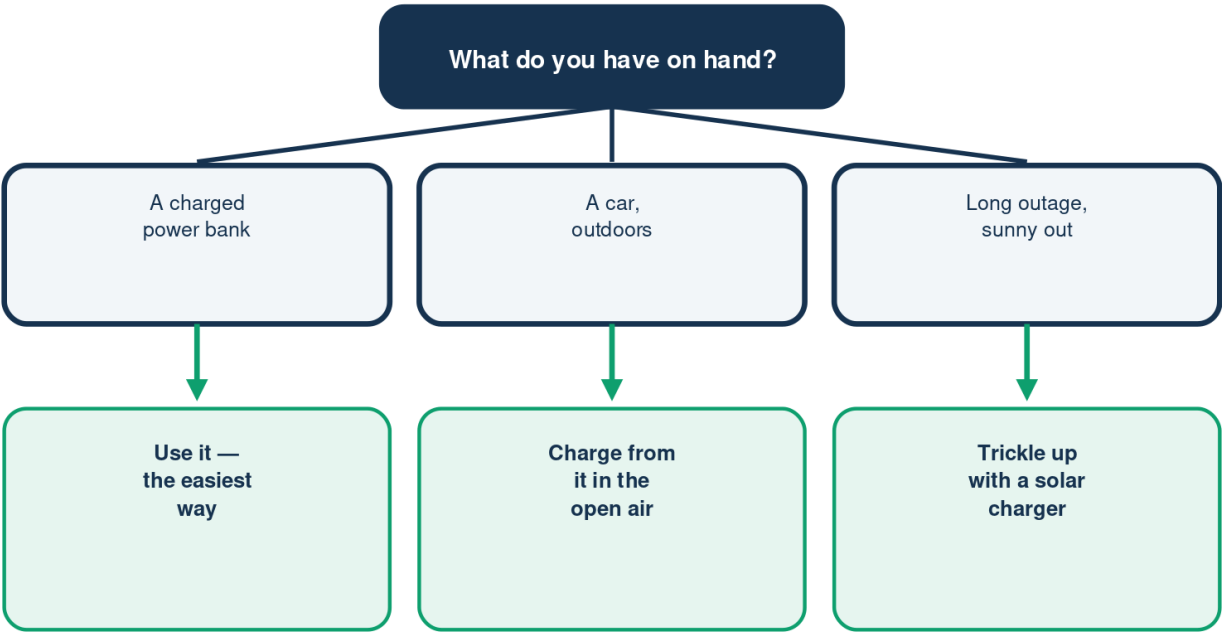
From simplest to biggest

The short version	
Power bank	Simplest, keep it charged
Car	Outdoors only, never garage
Generator or battery	For bigger needs
Solar	Slow, free, for long outages

For phones, a power bank is almost always all you need.

How Do I Charge Right Now?

Match your situation to the best source



Never run a car indoors or in a garage to charge — CO is deadly.

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

Stretch Your Battery

Simple settings that add hours

	Do this	Why it helps
Low-power mode	Turn it on	Trims background drain
Screen	Dim it, sleep it	The biggest drain
No signal	Airplane mode	Stops battery hunting
Reaching out	Text, don't call	Uses less, gets through

These cost nothing and can double how long a charge lasts.



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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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