



An Extended Guide · No. 1818

Your Water Plan for an Outage

Store it, keep it
safe, never run dry

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! Read this first — store water before you need it

Water is the one thing you cannot do without, and it is easy to take for granted until an outage. If your home is on a private well, this matters even more: the pump that lifts your water runs on electricity, so when the power stops, every tap, toilet, and hose stops with it. Even in town, storms can bring a boil-water notice or a break in service. So store water before you need it — a common, sensible guideline is about a gallon per person per day for several days, and don't forget your pets. Store-bought sealed water keeps longest and is the simplest place to start. If you take away one thing from this guide, let it be this: put a few gallons aside this week, before any storm is on the way.

Let's make your water plan

Water is the quiet essential. We rarely think about it — until the tap runs dry or the power goes out and the well pump stops. This guide makes sure that never catches you off guard.

I'm Bill, and this is one of the most important guides in the whole series, especially for my neighbors out in the country. In town, an outage is mostly dark and quiet. On a well, an outage is also dry — and that changes everything.

We'll cover how much to store, how to fill up fast when a storm's coming, how to keep stored water safe, and how to make questionable water safe to drink. None of it is complicated, and most of it costs next to nothing.

★ Not sure how much you'd need?

Tell me how many folks and pets are under your roof and I'll help you land on a sensible amount to keep on hand. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Your water plan, on one page

Remember these and you're in good shape.

- ☐ Store about a gallon per person per day, for several days.
- ☐ Add extra for pets, cooking, and anyone who's ill.
- ☐ Sealed store-bought water is simplest and keeps longest.
- ☐ On a well, store more — your pump stops when the power does.
- ☐ When a storm's coming, fill jugs, pots, and a clean bathtub.
- ☐ Keep stored water cool, dark, and dated; rotate it.
- ☐ To make water safe, boiling is the surest method.
- ☐ After flooding or a boil notice, don't drink from the tap.

✓ A gallon per person, per day

That's the number to anchor on — roughly half for drinking and half for cooking and washing. Multiply by the people in your home and the days you want to cover.

How much water to store

The math is simple, and it's worth doing on paper once.

The standard guideline from the safety agencies is about a gallon per person per day. Figure roughly half for drinking and half for cooking, brushing teeth, and a quick wash. Cover several days at a minimum — more if you're far from town.

Then add a margin. Hot weather, illness, a nursing mother, or a physically demanding cleanup all mean more water. Pets need their own supply too. When it comes to water, a little extra is never wasted.

Who or what	Plan for
Each person	About a gallon a day
Several days	Multiply the daily amount
Pets	Their own daily water
Hot weather or illness	Add a margin on top

✓ **Round up, always**

Water is cheap and keeps well. If you're unsure whether to store a little or a lot, store a lot.

On a well, no power means no water

This is the single most important page for anyone on a private well.

Your well pump runs on your home's electricity. When the power stops, the pump stops, and every tap, toilet, and hose in the house goes with it — often for longer than folks in town, since rural lines are usually the last to come back.

That means stored water isn't optional out in the country; it's the plan. Keep more than you think you'll need, and consider a way to run the pump in a long outage. Our well-pump-backup guide and our generator guides go deep on powering the pump safely — always a licensed electrician's hookup, never a cord or a backfeed.

! Fill up the moment a storm is forecast

If you're on a well and a big storm is coming, fill jugs, pots, and the bathtub before it hits. Once the power's out, you can't draw any more.

Store-bought or fill your own?

Both work. Many homes do a bit of each.

Sealed, store-bought water is the simplest option: it's clean, dated, and keeps the longest with no effort. A few cases in a closet is a fine foundation for any home's plan.

Filling your own clean, food-grade containers from the tap costs almost nothing and is perfect for the washing-and-flushing half of your supply. Just use safe containers and rotate the water so it stays fresh, which we'll cover in a moment.

✓ A simple two-part plan

Keep some sealed store-bought water for drinking, and fill your own jugs for cooking and washing. It's an easy, affordable way to cover both.

Filling up when a storm is coming

When a forecast turns serious, a half-hour of filling can carry you for days.

- Fill clean pots, pitchers, and jugs with drinking water.
- Fill a clean bathtub for flushing and washing water.
- Freeze water in jugs — it chills the freezer and melts into drinking water later.
- Top off any food-grade containers you keep for this.
- On a well, do all of this before the power goes out, not after.

A scrubbed bathtub holds a surprising amount of water for flushing toilets and washing up. If you'd like the tub water kept cleaner, a food-grade tub liner made for this purpose works well — but a clean tub alone is a solid backup.

✓ Freezer jugs do double duty

Jugs of water in the freezer help keep food cold when the power's out, then thaw into extra drinking water. A genuinely useful two-for-one.

Keeping stored water safe

Stored water stays good for a long time when you treat it kindly.

Keep it somewhere cool and dark, away from sunlight and away from gasoline, cleaners, or anything with strong fumes, which can seep in over time. Write the date on each container so you know its age at a glance.

Sealed store-bought water carries its own date — use it by then and replace it. Water you've bottled yourself is best rotated every six months to a year. Our kit-maintenance guide folds this into an easy twice-a-year routine.

✓ Date every container

A simple marker line with the month and year turns 'I think that's old' into a decision you can make in a second.

Making questionable water safe to drink

If you're ever unsure about water, the safest move is to treat it — and boiling is the surest way.

Bringing water to a rolling boil for a full minute kills the germs that make people sick. Let it cool, and pour it between clean containers to freshen the taste. This is the method public-health agencies point to first, and the one to lean on whenever you can.

If you truly can't boil, agencies describe disinfecting clear water with a small, measured amount of plain, unscented household bleach. The exact amount depends on the bleach's strength, so follow the current Red Cross or health-department instructions rather than guessing. Cloudy water should be filtered through a clean cloth first.

! Boiling and bleach don't fix chemicals

These methods handle germs, not chemical contamination. If water may be polluted by chemicals or floodwater, don't drink it at all — use your stored water instead.

Water for washing, flushing, and pets

Not every gallon has to be drinking-quality. Plan for the rest, too.

That bathtub or those filled jugs cover a lot: pour a bucket into the toilet bowl to flush it, keep a jug by the sink for washing hands, and set aside water for pets. Keeping the two kinds of water separate in your mind — drinking versus washing — stretches your good water further.

A little hand sanitizer and a package of wet wipes go a long way when washing water is limited, and they belong in your main kit anyway.

✓ A bucket flushes a toilet

Pour about a gallon of water briskly into the bowl and it flushes on its own — no working water line needed. Good to know before you need it.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Everyone needs stored water. How much, and how central it is to your whole plan, depends a great deal on where your water comes from.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town on city water, the tap usually keeps running through an outage. Your water worry is mostly a boil-water notice or a rare main break.

- A few cases of drinking water covers most situations.
- Listen for boil-water notices after storms and flooding.
- Keep some filled jugs in case service is briefly interrupted.
- Restocking is quick once stores reopen.

If you are out in the country on a well

On a well, water and power are the same switch. When one goes, so does the other — so your stored water is doing the heavy lifting.

- Store considerably more water — days of it, for drinking and washing.
- Fill everything the moment a storm is forecast.
- Consider a safe way to run the pump in a long outage, per our well-pump-backup guide.
- After any flooding, have the well checked and disinfected before trusting the tap again.

★ Well homes, let's plan this together

A well changes the whole picture, and I help a lot of rural neighbors get water-ready. Tell me about your setup and I'll help you build a plan that fits. Call (330) 200-8042.

Understanding a boil-water notice

After some storms, your town may ask everyone to boil their water for a while. Here's what that means.

A boil-water notice means the water system may have been contaminated — often after flooding or a big pressure drop — and the water should be boiled before drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, or making ice, until officials say it's clear.

You'll usually hear about it through local news, your water provider, or emergency alerts — another reason a NOAA weather radio and a way to get information matter, as our weather-radio guide explains.

✓ When in doubt, boil or use stored water

If you're not sure whether a notice is still in effect, boil your water or drink from your stored supply until you get a clear all-clear.

A deeper plan for well homes

If you're on a well, a little extra planning pays off every time the lights flicker.

Beyond storing more water, think about how you'd get water flowing again in a long outage. Powering the pump takes a properly sized generator and a licensed electrician's hookup — our well-pump-backup guide covers this in full. Some folks also keep a manual hand pump or a second water source in mind.

After 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 through it.

! Never rig up the pump yourself

A well pump is a 240-volt appliance wired into your panel. Powering it safely is always a licensed electrician's job — never a cord, and never backfeeding an outlet.

How much to store for your household

Let's turn the gallon-a-day rule into a number that fits your home.

Count the people in your home, decide how many days you want to cover, and multiply by a gallon a day. Add water for pets, a margin for hot weather or illness, and a bit more if you're on a well or far from stores. Write the total down and work toward it.

Household	A sensible starting target
One or two people, in town	Several gallons per person
A family, in town	A case or two per person
Any home on a well	Noticeably more, for washing too
Pets in the house	Add their daily needs

✓ **Build to the number over time**

You don't have to buy it all at once. Add a case or fill a few jugs each week until you reach your total.

Rotating and refreshing your supply

Stored water lasts a long time, but it's not forever — a quick refresh keeps it good.

- Use sealed store-bought water by its printed date, then replace it.
- Rotate water you bottled yourself every six months to a year.
- A twice-a-year check — at the clock changes — keeps it simple.
- Pour old stored water on the garden rather than wasting it.
- Refill and re-date containers as you rotate them.

✓ Drink it down and refill

An easy rotation: when a jug reaches its date, use it for the plants or the pets, wash the jug, and refill it fresh. Nothing wasted.

Which containers are safe

The container matters almost as much as the water.

Use clean, food-grade containers with tight lids — sturdy water jugs, drink bottles, or containers sold for water storage. Wash them well before filling. Store-bought sealed water needs no thought at all; just keep it sealed until you need it.

Steer clear of containers that once held milk or juice, which are hard to fully clean and can spoil, and never reuse anything that held chemicals, cleaners, or fuel. When in doubt, choose a container clearly meant for food or water.

! Never reuse a chemical container

A jug that once held detergent, antifreeze, or fuel can leave traces that no rinsing removes. Keep those far away from your water supply.

Babies, seniors, and medical needs

Some households need to plan for a little more, and a little differently.

A baby may need extra clean water for formula. Someone who's ill or recovering needs more to stay hydrated. Certain medicines and medical routines call for clean water on hand. Take a moment to think about who in your home has needs beyond the average.

Our senior-and-caregiver guide and our medical-device guide cover planning around specific people. For water, the rule is simply to store a bit more, and to keep it clean and close.

★ Let's account for everyone

If someone in your home has particular needs, I'm glad to help you think the water side through. Call (330) 200-8042 and we'll make sure no one's overlooked.

When not to drink from the tap

A few clear situations call for reaching for your stored water instead.

- During a boil-water notice, until officials lift it.
- After flooding near your home, well, or water lines.
- If the water looks cloudy, colored, or smells off.
- If you're on a well and aren't sure it stayed clean.
- Any time you simply aren't sure — err on the safe side.

! When in doubt, use stored or boiled water

It's never worth the risk of getting sick during an outage. If anything about the tap water seems off, switch to your stored supply or boil first.

A solid water plan for very little

Water may be the most affordable peace of mind you can buy.

A case of water here, a few filled jugs there, a scrubbed bathtub when a storm's coming — that's a complete plan, and it costs almost nothing. You don't need special gear or a big pantry, just a habit of keeping a few gallons ahead.

✓ Start with three gallons today

If you do just one thing after reading this, set aside three gallons per person this week. You can always build from there.

Your quick before-a-storm water steps

When a serious forecast lands, run through this in the calm before it arrives.

- ☐ Fill clean jugs and pitchers with drinking water.
- ☐ Fill a clean bathtub for washing and flushing.
- ☐ Freeze several jugs of water for the freezer.
- ☐ Top off any food-grade storage containers.
- ☐ On a well, finish all of this before the power can go out.
- ☐ Set aside a bucket for flushing the toilet.

✓ Half an hour buys you days

Nearly all of this takes one quiet half-hour. It's the highest-value thirty minutes in all of storm prep.

Your printable water checklist

The whole plan, in one place to keep.

- ☐ Stored: about a gallon per person per day, several days' worth.
- ☐ Extra set aside for pets, cooking, and illness.
- ☐ Some sealed store-bought water for drinking.
- ☐ Filled food-grade jugs for washing and flushing.
- ☐ Every container cool, dark, and dated.
- ☐ A rotation habit — checked twice a year.
- ☐ A way to make water safe: the ability to boil it.
- ☐ On a well: extra water and a safe plan to run the pump.

★ Want help getting water-ready?

I'll help you land on the right amount, find safe containers, and build a well-water plan if you need one. A first visit is a flat \$99. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The water questions I'm asked most often.

Q: How much water should I really store?

About a gallon per person per day, covering several days at least — more if you're on a well or far from town. Add extra for pets, cooking, and anyone who's ill.

Q: How long does stored water last?

Sealed store-bought water keeps until its printed date. Water you bottle yourself is best rotated every six months to a year. Keep it cool, dark, and dated, and it stays good a long while.

Q: What's the best way to make water safe to drink?

Boiling it at a rolling boil for a full minute is the surest method. If you can't boil, agencies describe a small measured amount of unscented household bleach, but follow current official instructions for the exact amount.

Q: I'm on a well — what's different for me?

Your pump stops when the power does, so water is central to your whole plan. Store much more than a town home would, fill up before any storm, and see our well-pump-backup guide about safely powering the pump.

Q: What should I do during a boil-water notice?

Boil tap water for a minute before drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, or making ice — or use your stored water — until officials say the water is safe again.

★ Water questions are always welcome

This is one where a quick conversation can settle a lot. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you feel confident about your water 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 your outage water plan 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.

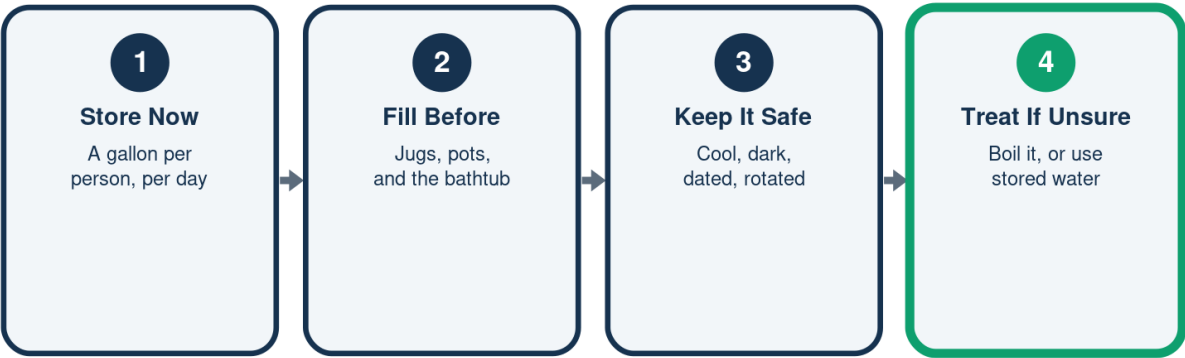
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

Your Water Plan, Step by Step

Four simple moves for water peace of mind



On a well, do the filling before the power can go out.

How Much Water to Store

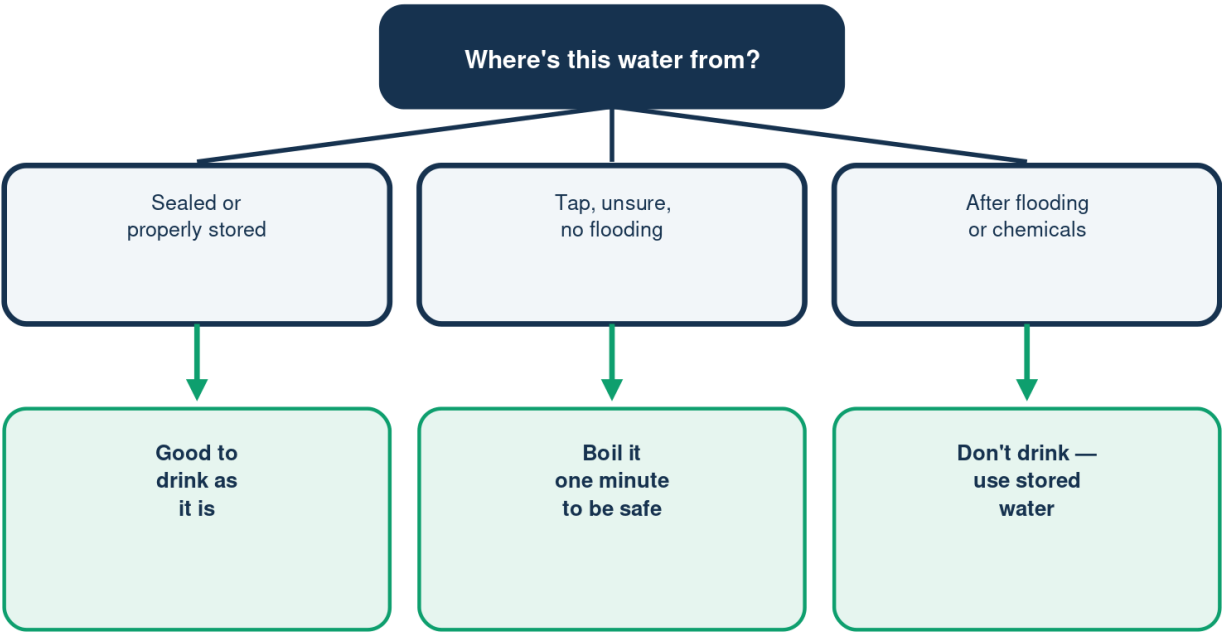
Start from a gallon a day and build up

Plan for	
Each person	About a gallon a day
How long	Several days at least
On a well	More — washing too
Pets	Their own daily water
Hot or ill	Add a margin

When in doubt, round up — water is cheap and keeps well.

Is This Water Safe to Drink?

A quick gut-check before you pour a glass



Boiling and bleach fix germs, not chemical or flood pollution.

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

Safe vs. Risky Containers

What to store your water in

	Use these	Avoid these
Best	Food-grade jugs	Old milk jugs
Simple	Sealed store water	Juice bottles
Never	Clean drink bottles	Chemical or fuel jugs

If a container held chemicals or fuel, keep it away from water.



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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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