



An Extended Guide · No. 1822

# A NOAA Weather Radio and Staying Informed

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Hear the warning  
when the power's out

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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. Staying informed is part of staying safe: the warnings a weather radio brings are how you know when to act, take cover, or leave.

## Let's keep you in the know

When the power's out and the TV, internet, and maybe even your cell signal are down, a simple weather radio becomes your window on the storm — and knowing what's coming is half of staying safe.

I'm Bill, and this guide is about staying informed when the usual ways go dark. We'll cover the NOAA weather radio — a wonderful little device that pulls official warnings out of thin air with no power or internet at all — plus phone alerts and a few other backups.

It's one of the most reassuring items in any kit, and one of the least fussy. Let's find the right one for you and get it set up.

**★ I'll help you set it up**

A weather radio is simple, but the first setup can be fiddly. I'm glad to help you choose one and get it tuned and tested. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

## Staying informed, on one page

The essentials for knowing what's happening.

- ❑ Keep a battery or hand-crank NOAA weather radio in your kit.
- ❑ It brings official weather warnings with no power or internet.
- ❑ Set it up and test it before you need it, not during a storm.
- ❑ Keep spare batteries with it, or use its hand crank.
- ❑ Leave Wireless Emergency Alerts turned on on your phone.
- ❑ Keep a battery AM/FM radio for local news, too.
- ❑ Your car radio is a good backup source of news.
- ❑ Trust official sources over rumors and social media.

### ✓ A weather radio is worth every penny

For a small cost, a NOAA weather radio gives you official warnings even when everything else is dark. It's one of the best-value items in any kit.

## What a NOAA weather radio is

It's a small radio that listens to the government's own weather broadcasts, all day, every day.

The National Weather Service broadcasts continuous weather information and official warnings over special radio channels, around the clock. A NOAA weather radio tunes to those broadcasts, so you hear watches and warnings straight from the source — no TV, no internet, no cell signal required.

Many models can sound an alarm when a warning is issued for your area, even if the radio is quiet, so it can wake you for a nighttime tornado or ice storm. That alerting feature is what sets a weather radio apart from an ordinary one.

### ✓ Straight from the source

Because it comes directly from the National Weather Service, a weather radio isn't waiting on a station to break in. You hear the official word the moment it's issued.

## Why it matters, especially in Ohio

Our corner of Ohio sees the full menu of weather, and warnings can come at any hour.

Portage County gets severe thunderstorms, the occasional tornado, damaging wind, ice storms, and heavy snow. Many of those threats arrive with little notice, sometimes overnight. When the power's already out from the first round of a storm, a weather radio keeps you informed about what's still coming.

That early word gives you time to act — take cover, move to a safe room, bring in the animals, or decide to leave. Information is what turns a dangerous surprise into something you saw coming.

### ✓ It wakes you when it counts

A weather radio with the alert turned on can wake a sleeping household for a late-night warning — the kind of thing a dark, silent phone might miss.

## The kinds of weather radio

They come in a few flavors — here's how they differ.

- Battery-powered: simple and portable; keep spare batteries with it.
- Hand-crank: winds up for power with no batteries at all — great for a long outage.
- Plug-in with battery backup: sits on a shelf on wall power, switches to batteries when the power fails.
- Combo models: often include a flashlight, an AM/FM radio, and a way to charge a phone from the crank.

Many of the best kit radios are hand-crank combos: crank for power, a built-in light, AM/FM for local news, and the NOAA weather band all in one. That covers several of your kit needs in a single device.

### ✓ A crank combo does several jobs

A hand-crank radio with a light and a phone-charging crank earns its place in the kit by handling information, light, and a little charging all at once.

## Choosing the right one for you

A few features are worth looking for; the rest is personal preference.

Look for a radio that runs without wall power — batteries, a hand crank, or both — and, ideally, one that can sound an alert for your area. Simple, clearly labeled buttons and a decent speaker matter, especially if eyes or ears aren't what they were. A crank that also charges a phone is a nice bonus.

You don't need the fanciest model. A reliable radio you find easy to use beats a feature-packed one that baffles you. If you'd like a second opinion before buying, I'm happy to help.

### ★ Not sure which to get?

Tell me how you'd like to use it and I'll help you pick a weather radio that's easy for you to operate. Call (330) 200-8042.

## Setting it up before you need it

Ten quiet minutes now means it just works when a storm hits.

- Put in fresh batteries, or give the crank a good wind.
- Tune it to your local National Weather Service channel — the manual lists them.
- If it has a county or area alert setting, set it for your county using the manual's steps.
- Test the alert feature so you know what it sounds like.
- Keep it somewhere central, with spare batteries beside it.

Setting the area code, if your radio has one, keeps it from alerting for distant counties — so when it does sound, you know it means you. The manual walks through it, or I can sit with you and do it together.

### ✓ Test it so it's familiar

Trigger a test alert once so the household recognizes the sound. A warning tone is only useful if everyone knows what it means.

## Other ways to keep informed

A weather radio is the anchor, but it's good to have more than one source.

Keep a simple battery-powered AM/FM radio for local news and updates — stations carry a lot of practical outage information. Your car radio is another reliable source when you're charging a phone outside. And your phone itself carries official emergency alerts, which we'll cover next.

### ✓ The car radio is an easy backup

While you're out at the car charging a phone anyway, flip on the radio for the latest local news. Two useful jobs, one trip outside.

## Emergency alerts on your phone

Your phone can buzz with official warnings — as long as the network and battery hold up.

Modern phones receive Wireless Emergency Alerts — the loud official warnings for tornadoes, flash floods, and the like — with no app and no signup. Make sure they're switched on in your phone's settings. They're a valuable layer, though they depend on cell service, which storms can knock down.

Because the network can fail, treat phone alerts as one source among several, with the weather radio as the backstop that doesn't need a cell tower.

### ✓ Leave emergency alerts on

It's worth checking that emergency and public-safety alerts are turned on in your phone's settings. If you're not sure how, I can show you in a minute.

## Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Everyone benefits from a weather radio, but the fewer other sources you have, the more it matters.

### If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, you often have more ways to get news — neighbors, closer stations, quicker word of mouth — so the radio is a valued backup.

- Cell service usually holds up better, so phone alerts often work.
- Local stations and neighbors fill in a lot of information.
- Shorter outages mean less time relying on the radio alone.
- It's still worth having for the overnight warning nobody else catches.

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

In the country, you may be farther from towers and stations, so a weather radio can be your most dependable source of official warnings.

- Weaker cell signal makes the no-signal weather radio invaluable.
- Longer outages mean you'll lean on it more, so keep it powered.
- A hand-crank model shines when batteries and power are both scarce.
- Know which National Weather Service channel comes in best at your place.

#### ★ Let's make sure you'll hear the warning

Town or country, I'll help you set up a weather radio and phone alerts so a warning never slips past you. Call (330) 200-8042.

# Understanding a watch versus a warning

Two words you'll hear a lot — and the difference matters.

A watch means conditions are right for dangerous weather — be ready, stay alert, and review your plan. A warning means it's happening or about to; take action now. For a tornado warning, that means get to your safe spot immediately.

| You hear | It means                                |
|----------|-----------------------------------------|
| Watch    | Be ready — conditions are favorable     |
| Warning  | Act now — it's happening or imminent    |
| Advisory | Be aware — less severe, still take care |

✓ **Warning means do something**

The simplest way to remember it: a watch says get ready, a warning says act. When you hear 'warning,' follow your plan right away.

## Signing up for local alerts

Your county and your utility may offer alerts worth opting into ahead of time.

Many counties, including here in our area, offer an emergency alert signup that sends warnings and instructions to your phone or email. Your electric utility likely offers outage alerts and restoration updates too. Signing up on a calm day means the information finds you when it matters.

### ★ I can help you sign up

If registering for county or utility alerts online feels like a chore, that's the kind of thing I can help you do in a few minutes. Call (330) 200-8042.

## Keeping your radio ready

A weather radio is only useful if it's alive when you reach for it.

- Check the batteries when you check the rest of your kit.
- Give a hand-crank model a test wind now and then.
- Run a quick alert test so you know it still works.
- Keep spare batteries taped to it or right alongside.
- Store it somewhere central and known, not buried in a closet.

### ✓ Test at the clock changes

Fold the radio into your twice-a-year kit check. A fresh set of batteries and a quick test keep it ready for the next storm season.

## Easy to hear, easy to use

Pick a radio that works with your eyes, ears, and hands — not against them.

Look for a loud, clear speaker and a strong alert tone, big and simple buttons, and a clear display. Some radios offer extra-loud alarms or a bed-shaker accessory for anyone hard of hearing, so a nighttime warning still gets through. Keep the radio where it's easy to reach and operate.

### ★ Let's find one that fits you

If small buttons or soft speakers are a struggle, I'll help you choose a radio that's genuinely easy for you to use. Call (330) 200-8042.

## A simple information plan for the house

Decide ahead of time how your household will stay informed.

Agree on who keeps an ear on the weather radio, when you'll check for updates, and where the radio and spare batteries live. Write down your local station and any channel settings so anyone can operate it. A little planning means the whole household stays informed, not just the one person who knows the radio.

### ✓ Write the settings on a card

Tape a small card to the radio with the local channel and how to trigger an alert test. Then it's not a mystery to whoever picks it up.

## When cell and internet are down

This is exactly the moment a weather radio was made for.

In a big storm, cell towers and internet can go down along with the power. That's when the no-signal weather radio truly shines — it keeps pulling in official warnings when nothing else can. Pair it with a battery AM/FM radio for local news and your car radio as another source, and you're still connected to the outside world.

### ✓ Radio needs no towers

Unlike your phone, a weather radio doesn't depend on cell towers or the internet. When those fail, it just keeps working — which is the whole point of having one.

## Trust official word over rumor

In a storm, good information calms; bad information stirs up worry.

Stick to official sources — the National Weather Service on your radio, local stations, and your county's emergency alerts — for what's actually happening and what to do. Rumors and unverified posts spread fast during storms and can send you the wrong way. When in doubt, go with the official word.

### ✓ One trusted source beats ten guesses

If reports conflict, believe the weather radio and local officials. They're the ones with the real picture.

## Staying informed for very little

Good information is one of the cheapest kinds of readiness.

A basic hand-crank weather radio — often bundled with a light and a phone-charging crank — costs little and covers information, light, and a bit of charging at once. Add the free step of turning on your phone's emergency alerts, and you've got a solid information plan for very little.

### ✓ One crank radio does a lot

If budget is tight, a single hand-crank weather radio with a light is a smart buy — it quietly covers several kit needs in one device.

## Your before-a-storm information steps

When a serious forecast lands, get your information ready.

- ☐ Put fresh batteries in the weather radio, or wind the crank.
- ☐ Confirm it's tuned to your local channel and the alert works.
- ☐ Check that phone emergency alerts are turned on.
- ☐ Charge a battery AM/FM radio or confirm the car radio works.
- ☐ Note where the radio and spare batteries are kept.
- ☐ Know your household's safe spot for a tornado warning.

### ✓ Tune in before it hits

Get the radio going before the storm arrives, so you're already listening — not fumbling to set it up in the dark.

## Your printable staying-informed checklist

Everything for knowing what's happening, in one place.

- ☐ A battery or hand-crank NOAA weather radio in the kit.
- ☐ Tuned to your local channel, with the area alert set and tested.
- ☐ Spare batteries kept right with it.
- ☐ Phone emergency alerts turned on.
- ☐ A battery AM/FM radio for local news.
- ☐ Signed up for county and utility alerts on a calm day.
- ☐ The whole household knows the watch-versus-warning difference.
- ☐ A twice-a-year test-and-batteries habit.

### ★ Want help getting set up?

I'll help you choose a weather radio, tune it, set the alerts, and turn on your phone's warnings. A first visit is a flat \$99, and I can often help on-screen for \$49. Call (330) 200-8042.

## Common Questions

The questions I hear most about staying informed.

### **Q: What is a NOAA weather radio, exactly?**

It's a small radio that tunes to the National Weather Service's around-the-clock broadcasts, so you hear official watches and warnings straight from the source — with no power, internet, or cell signal needed. Many can sound an alarm for your area.

### **Q: Do I still need one if my phone gets alerts?**

Yes — phone alerts are great, but they depend on cell service, which storms can knock down. A weather radio keeps working when the towers don't, so it's the backstop that doesn't fail with the network.

### **Q: What kind should I get?**

One that runs without wall power — batteries, a hand crank, or both — and ideally one that can alert for your county. A hand-crank combo with a light and phone-charging crank is a popular, versatile choice.

### **Q: What's the difference between a watch and a warning?**

A watch means conditions are favorable for dangerous weather, so be ready. A warning means it's happening or about to, so act now — for a tornado warning, get to your safe spot immediately.

### **Q: How do I set it up?**

Put in batteries or wind the crank, tune it to your local National Weather Service channel from the manual, set your county alert if it has one, and run a test. I'm glad to help you through it if it feels fiddly.

#### **★ Happy to get you set up**

Choosing, tuning, and testing a weather radio is quick with a little help. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we'll make sure you'll always hear the warning.

## 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 staying informed during 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

# Stay Informed With No Power

Four steps to never miss a warning



A weather radio works when phones and internet don't.

## Ways to Get Alerts

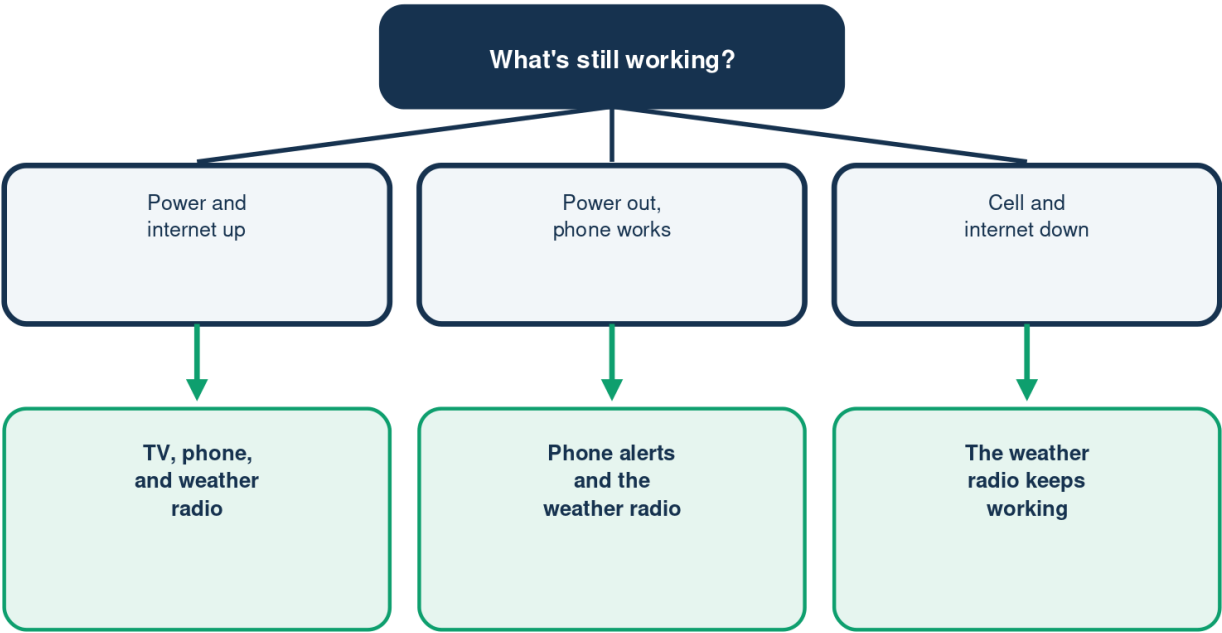
Layer a few so one always works

| What it needs      |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| NOAA weather radio | No power or signal |
| Phone alerts       | Cell service       |
| Battery AM/FM      | Just batteries     |
| Car radio          | The car, outdoors  |

The weather radio is the one that never needs a tower.

# How Will I Hear the Warning?

Make sure something reaches you



Trust official word from the weather radio over storm rumors.

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

## Watch vs. Warning

Two words worth knowing by heart

|          | It means              | You should            |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Watch    | Conditions favor it   | Get ready, stay alert |
| Warning  | Happening or imminent | Act now, take cover   |
| Advisory | Less severe hazard    | Be aware, take care   |

Warning means do something — follow your plan right away.



## 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**

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

— 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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