



An Extended Guide · No. 1827

Your Ohio Winter-Storm Kit

Warm, stocked, and
ready for the ice

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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. Winter adds its own hazards — cold, ice, and snow that can block a generator's exhaust or a tailpipe. Keep all of that in mind as we build your winter kit.

Let's build your winter-storm kit

Here in Portage County, winter is the season most likely to knock the power out — an ice storm can down lines for days. A winter kit is your regular outage kit, plus a few extras for cold, ice, and being snowed in.

I'm Bill, and Ohio winters have taught me that the folks who do best are the ones who got ready in the fall. This guide adds the cold-weather pieces to everything in our home-outage-kit guide: warmth, traction, a car kit, and a plan for a long, cold, snowed-in stretch.

We'll keep it practical and lean on our heating and senior guides for the deeper details. The goal is simple: when the ice takes the power down, you're warm, fed, and calm.

★ Let's get you winter-ready

Fall is the time to prepare for winter outages. If you'd like help getting your home and kit ready before the cold, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

Your winter kit, on one page

The winter extras, on top of your regular outage kit.

- ❑ Plenty of warm blankets, sleeping bags, and warm clothes.
- ❑ Hand and foot warmers, hats, gloves, and warm socks.
- ❑ Ice melt or sand for walkways, and a snow shovel.
- ❑ A winter kit in the car — blanket, shovel, traction, warmers.
- ❑ A deeper food and water supply, in case you're snowed in.
- ❑ A safe heat plan, per our heating guide.
- ❑ A way to keep a generator's exhaust clear of snow.
- ❑ A weather radio and a plan to check on the vulnerable.

✓ Ice storms mean long outages

An ice storm can leave rural lines down for days. Build your winter kit for a longer haul than a summer thunderstorm outage.

What Ohio winters throw at us

Knowing what's coming helps you prepare for the right things.

Our winters bring heavy snow, bitter cold, and — most dangerous for the power — ice storms. Ice coats power lines and tree branches until they snap, and the outages that follow can last for days, especially out in the country where lines run long and crews arrive last.

Add roads too snowy or icy to travel, and a winter outage can leave you on your own for a good while. That's why the winter kit leans toward warmth and a deeper supply — you may be riding it out at home for longer than in any other season.

✓ Prepare for days, not hours

Winter outages tend to be the longest of the year. When you stock your winter kit, plan for a multi-day stretch, particularly if you're rural.

Why ice storms are the real troublemaker

Of all our winter weather, ice is the one most likely to take the power for a long time.

A quarter-inch of ice is heavy enough to bring down limbs and lines, and a serious ice storm can leave whole areas dark. Downed lines, blocked roads, and dangerous footing all come together at once. Travel gets risky, and repairs take time.

That combination — long outage, hard travel, deep cold — is exactly what a winter kit is built for. Stay home, stay warm, and stay put until it's safe and the power's back.

! Stay away from downed lines

After an ice storm, treat every downed wire as live and deadly. Keep well clear, keep others clear, and report it to your utility. Never drive over or near a fallen line.

What to add for winter

Start with your regular outage kit, then add these cold-weather pieces.

- Extra warm blankets, and cold-rated sleeping bags.
- Warm layers, hats, gloves, and thick socks for everyone.
- Disposable hand and foot warmers.
- Ice melt or sand, and a sturdy snow shovel.
- A deeper food and water supply for a longer outage.
- Warm, high-energy foods and a way to make a hot drink outdoors.
- Emergency foil blankets, which pack tiny and reflect body heat.

Most of this is inexpensive and stores easily. Gather it in the fall, before the first hard storm, so it's waiting when you need it rather than sold out at the store.

✓ Stock up in the fall

Blankets, warmers, ice melt, and a shovel are easy to find and cheap in autumn — and scarce once the first big storm hits. Get them early.

Staying warm safely — the short version

Warmth is the heart of winter outage safety, and it has its own full guide.

Close off and heat one room, layer up, and pile on blankets. Use only heat sources rated safe for indoor use — never an oven, a grill, charcoal, or any unvented burning inside. Keep a carbon-monoxide alarm working wherever you heat. Our heating-safely guide covers all of this in depth; it's essential winter reading.

! Never heat with an oven or a grill

It bears repeating in any winter guide: heating a home with a gas oven, a grill, or charcoal causes fires and carbon-monoxide poisoning. Use layers, one warm room, and safe heat only.

Keeping your pipes from freezing

A cold, powerless house risks frozen and burst pipes — a winter headache worth preventing.

If you can keep a little heat in the house, do. Let faucets drip so moving water resists freezing, open cabinet doors so warm air reaches the pipes under sinks, and pay special attention to pipes along outside walls. Above all, know where your main water shutoff is, so a burst pipe becomes a quick fix instead of a flood.

✓ A dripping faucet beats a burst pipe

Letting your faucets trickle during a hard freeze is a tiny waste of water that can save you from a burst pipe and a soaked house.

A winter kit for your car

Winter storms strand people on the road, so your car needs its own kit.

- A warm blanket or sleeping bag, and extra hat and gloves.
- A snow shovel and an ice scraper.
- Sand or cat litter for traction under stuck tires.
- Hand warmers, water, and some high-energy snacks.
- A flashlight, a phone charging cord, and jumper cables.
- A bright cloth to tie on the antenna if you're stuck.

Keep your gas tank fuller in winter, and tell someone your route before a trip in bad weather. Our car-as-backup guide covers using the vehicle safely, including the vital rule about exhaust.

! If stuck, keep the exhaust pipe clear

If you're stranded and run the engine briefly to warm up, make sure the tailpipe is clear of snow and crack a window. A snow-blocked exhaust can fill the car with deadly carbon monoxide.

Riding out being snowed in

Sometimes the safest thing is simply to stay home and wait it out.

If roads are impassable, plan to be self-sufficient at home for several days: enough food, water, warmth, and medicine to not need to go anywhere. This is where a deeper winter supply pays off. Keep informed with your weather radio, check on family and neighbors, and be patient — crews are working, and it will pass.

✓ Self-sufficient beats stranded

A well-stocked winter kit means being snowed in is an inconvenience, not an emergency. Stay put, stay warm, and let the roads clear.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Winter tests everyone, but the country tends to get hit harder and wait longer — so a rural winter kit runs deeper.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, roads are plowed sooner and power often returns faster, so a solid winter kit and a warm-room plan usually carry you through.

- Plows and crews generally reach town streets first.
- A shorter outage means less time to stay self-sufficient.
- A warming center or relative's home is usually close if needed.
- Still keep warmth gear and a car kit — ice storms don't spare town.

If you are out in the country on a well

In the country, roads clear last, lines are repaired last, and the well pump is down — so plan to be on your own longer.

- Stock a deeper supply of food, water, warmth, and medicine.
- Remember the well pump won't run — keep stored water from freezing.
- Keep the driveway and a path to any generator clear of drifts.
- Expect a longer wait for power and plowing, and plan accordingly.

★ Let's winter-proof your plan

Town or country, I'll help you build a winter kit and plan sized to how long you might be on your own. Call (330) 200-8042.

Getting around safely on ice

A fall on the ice can be as serious as the storm itself, especially for older adults.

Spread ice melt or sand on steps and walkways, wear boots with good tread, and take short, flat-footed steps — walk like a penguin, as they say. Keep a hand free for a railing, and don't rush. If you don't need to go out on the ice, don't.

! Salt the steps, and slow down

Icy steps and walks send many people to the hospital each winter. Keep them salted or sanded, wear good boots, and take your time — a slow trip beats a bad fall.

Snow, exhaust, and your generator

If you run a generator in winter, snow adds a hazard to watch.

A generator still belongs outdoors, well away from the house, even in a storm — and now you must also keep its exhaust clear of piling snow, and keep a shoveled path to reach it safely. Blowing snow and drifts can block exhaust or bury the unit. Our cold-weather generator guidance in the generator series covers winter running in detail.

! Keep the exhaust clear of snow

Drifting snow can block a generator's exhaust and push carbon monoxide back toward the house. Check on it, keep it clear, and keep it far from the walls.

Winterize your home before the season

A little fall preparation prevents a lot of winter trouble.

- Have the furnace and any wood stove or chimney serviced.
- Seal drafts around doors and windows with weatherstripping.
- Clear gutters so melting snow can drain and not form ice dams.
- Know where your main water shutoff and breaker panel are.
- Trim tree limbs that hang over the house or power lines, using a pro for anything near wires.

! Leave tree work near power lines to the pros

Never trim branches close to power lines yourself. That's dangerous work for a trained crew or the utility — call them, don't climb up there.

Watching out for the vulnerable

Cold is hardest on the old, the young, and the unwell — keep them warmest and check often.

Older adults and infants lose heat fast and may not notice how cold they've become. Keep them in the warm room, well wrapped, and check on them frequently. Know the signs of hypothermia — shivering, drowsiness, confusion, slurred speech — and get help if you see them. Our senior and heating guides go deeper on keeping the vulnerable safe.

★ Check on older neighbors, too

In a cold snap, a knock on an elderly neighbor's door can make all the difference. If you'd like help making a check-in plan, call (330) 200-8042.

Keeping informed through a winter storm

Winter warnings and updates help you decide when to hunker down and when it's safe to move.

Keep your NOAA weather radio handy for winter storm warnings, and watch for word on road conditions and when power might return. Our weather-radio guide covers staying informed when the power, internet, and cell are down — which winter storms are very good at causing all at once.

✓ Let the radio tell you when it's safe

Rather than guessing, let official updates on your weather radio guide when to travel and when to stay put. Waiting for the all-clear is usually the safe call.

Shoveling snow without hurting yourself

Snow shoveling sends many people to the hospital each winter — take it easy.

Shoveling is hard work in the cold, and it can strain the heart, especially for older adults or anyone with heart trouble. Warm up first, pace yourself, take frequent breaks, push the snow rather than lifting it, and stop at once if you feel chest pain, shortness of breath, or dizziness. There's no shame in asking for help or waiting it out.

! Stop if your chest hurts

Chest pain, unusual shortness of breath, or dizziness while shoveling can be a warning sign. Stop immediately, rest, and call 911 if it doesn't pass. Don't push through it.

If you truly must travel

The best winter-storm travel advice is don't — but if you must, do it carefully.

- Tell someone your route and when you expect to arrive.
- Take your winter car kit and a charged phone.
- Keep the gas tank full and go slow.
- If you get stuck, stay with the car — it's shelter and easier to find.
- Run the engine only briefly to warm up, with the exhaust clear.

✓ Staying home is the safest plan

When a winter storm hits, the safest place is usually home. If the trip can wait, let it — the roads will be there when it's safe.

A winter kit for very little

Most winter readiness is warm bedding and a few cheap extras.

Blankets and warm clothes you already own cost nothing to gather. Ice melt or a bag of sand, hand warmers, and a shovel are inexpensive. A car kit comes together from things around the house. The priciest part of winter readiness is usually just a deeper food and water supply, built up over a few grocery trips.

✓ Blankets and layers first

Before buying anything, gather all the warm bedding and clothing you own into your winter kit. It's free, and it's the core of staying warm.

Your before-a-winter-storm steps

When a big winter storm is in the forecast, run through this.

- ❑ Charge phones, power banks, and devices; fill the gas tank.
- ❑ Fill water containers and set faucets to drip.
- ❑ Ready your warm room and gather blankets and warm clothes.
- ❑ Confirm heat sources and CO alarms are ready and working.
- ❑ Salt or sand the steps and clear a path to any generator.
- ❑ Check on anyone who may need help, and stock a few extra days.

✓ Warm and charge before it hits

Get the house warm, everything charged, and water filled while you still have power. A warm, ready house rides out an ice storm far more easily.

Your printable winter-storm checklist

The winter extras, in one place to keep.

- ☐ Warm blankets, sleeping bags, layers, hats, and gloves.
- ☐ Hand and foot warmers, and emergency foil blankets.
- ☐ Ice melt or sand, and a snow shovel.
- ☐ A stocked winter car kit.
- ☐ A deeper food, water, and medicine supply.
- ☐ A safe warm-room and heating plan, with a working CO alarm.
- ☐ Dripping faucets and a known main water shutoff.
- ☐ A weather radio and a plan to check on the vulnerable.

★ Want help getting winter-ready?

I'll help you build a winter kit and a plan sized to a long Ohio outage. A first visit is a flat \$99. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The winter questions I hear most.

Q: What makes a winter outage different?

Winter outages, especially from ice storms, tend to be the longest of the year, with hard travel and deep cold on top. So a winter kit leans toward warmth, a deeper supply, and being able to stay self-sufficient at home for days.

Q: What should I add to my kit for winter?

Warm blankets and sleeping bags, extra layers, hats and gloves, hand and foot warmers, ice melt or sand, a snow shovel, a winter car kit, and a deeper food and water supply — on top of your regular outage kit.

Q: How do I keep my pipes from freezing in an outage?

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. Watch pipes along outside walls.

Q: Is it safe to run my car to stay warm if I'm stuck?

Only briefly, and only with the tailpipe clear of snow and a window cracked. A snow-blocked exhaust can fill the car with deadly carbon monoxide. Stay with the car, and run the engine just enough to take the chill off.

Q: How do I shovel snow safely?

Warm up first, pace yourself, take breaks, and push the snow rather than lifting it. Shoveling strains the heart in the cold, so stop at once and call 911 if you feel chest pain, shortness of breath, or dizziness.

★ Let's get you through the winter

Ohio winters are no joke, but a good kit makes them manageable. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you get ready before the cold sets in.

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 getting ready for a winter 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

Ready for an Ohio Winter Storm

Four steps to a warm, safe winter outage



Ice storms mean long outages — plan for days, not hours.

Winter Kit Extras

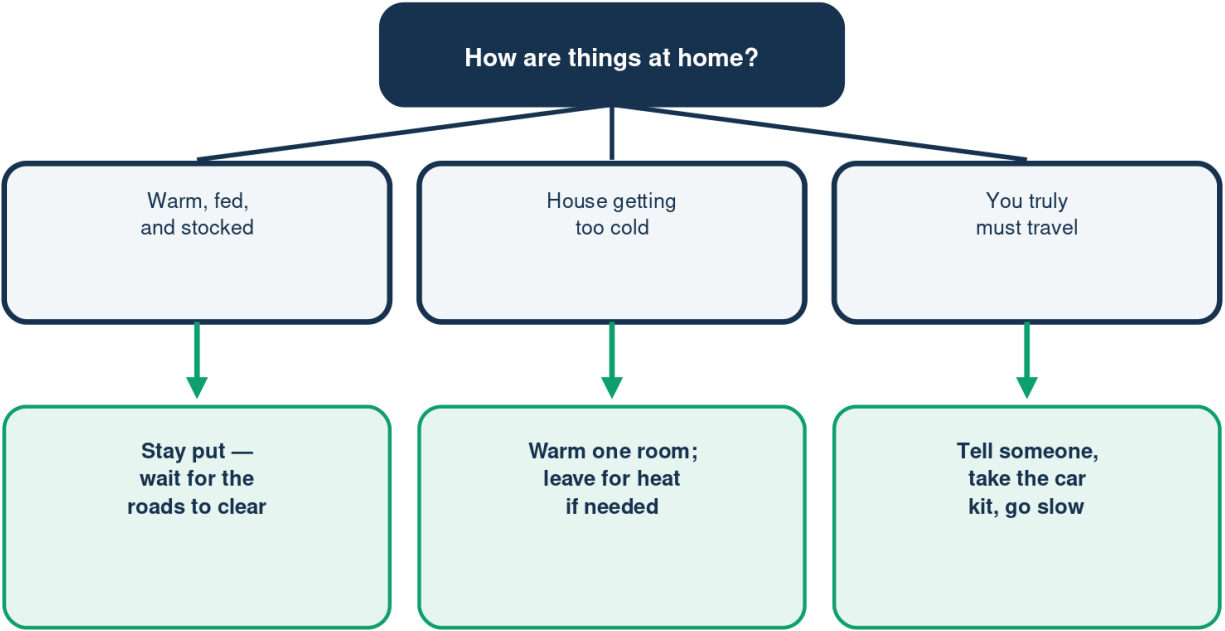
Added on top of your regular kit

The short version	
Warmth	Blankets, bags, warmers
Traction	Ice melt, sand, a shovel
The car	A full winter car kit
Supplies	A deeper food and water store
Pipes	Drip faucets, know the shutoff

Stock up in the fall, before the first big storm.

Snowed In and Powerless?

Match your situation to the next move



If stuck in the car, stay with it and keep the exhaust clear.

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

Your Winter Car Kit

Keep this in the trunk all season

What to pack	
Warmth	Blanket, hat, warmers
Traction	Shovel, sand, scraper
Supplies	Water, snacks, flashlight
Signal	Bright cloth, charged phone

Keep the tank full and tell someone your route.



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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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