



An Extended Guide · No. 1765

# Storm-Season Prep: What to Unplug

---

A simple routine before  
the weather turns

**Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal**

[BillsHomeTech.com](http://BillsHomeTech.com) · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

Free & printable — share it with someone who needs it



Book a visit —  
[billshometech.com/book](http://billshometech.com/book)

**! Read this first — two kinds of protection, one safety rule**

There are two kinds of surge protection in this guide, and they are not the same job. A whole-home surge protector wires into your electrical panel, where the power is always live and a mistake can be deadly — that is strictly a licensed electrician's work, almost always with a permit, and never a do-it-yourself project. (It isn't something I do myself, either; I help you understand it, choose wisely, and line up a trustworthy local pro.) The other kind — the surge-protector strips and plug-in units you use at the wall — are perfectly safe for you to set up on your own. One honest note either way: no surge protector is a lightning rod or an iron-clad guarantee, so in a violent electrical storm, unplugging a treasured device is still the surest protection of all. This guide is a simple, calm routine for the hours before a storm — what to unplug, what to leave running, and how a little prep now saves a lot of worry later.

**A little prep, and you can relax through the storm**

When the forecast turns rough, a five-minute routine is the difference between scrambling in the dark and settling in with a cup of coffee. This guide gives you that routine, plain and simple.

I'm Bill, of Bill's Home Tech in Portage County, Ohio. Over 30-plus years I've noticed that the folks who weather storms most calmly aren't the ones with the fanciest gear — they're the ones with a simple habit they don't have to think about. Let's build you one of those.

Nothing here is hard or technical. It's mostly deciding once, ahead of time, what you'll unplug and what you'll leave alone — so that when the sky darkens, you already know exactly what to do.

**★ Let's make your routine together**

If you'd like a hand setting this up so it's tailored to your home, that's just the sort of thing I do. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — no pressure, and nothing to sell you.

## The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these, you've got a storm routine most people would envy.

- ❑ Unplug what you can't afford to lose and don't need running — the TV, the computer, the game console — data lines like the cable included.
- ❑ Leave the necessities running: the refrigerator, and a sump pump that's on its own backup-power plan.
- ❑ Check that your surge protectors' indicator lights are still healthy, usually a steady green.
- ❑ Charge your phones and any battery backups ahead of time, in case the power goes out.
- ❑ Keep a short 'what to unplug' list by the door, so you never have to think it through in the moment.
- ❑ A whole-home protector means far less scrambling — but in a severe storm, unplugging your crown jewels is still the smartest move.

### ✓ One idea to hold onto

The goal isn't to do more in the moment — it's to decide less. Settle your routine once, write it down, and storm prep becomes a glance at a list instead of a scramble.

## Why a routine beats scrambling every time

The worst time to figure out what to unplug is when the thunder's already rattling the windows. So we do the thinking now, while it's calm.

When a storm's bearing down, nobody thinks clearly. You forget the cable box, or the computer in the back room, or you waste time wondering whether the fridge should come out too (it shouldn't). A little planning ahead takes all of that guesswork away.

And most of your protection should be running quietly in the background anyway — good surge protectors on your sensitive gear, and ideally a whole-home unit at the panel. The routine in this guide is just the extra bit you add for the storms that deserve it.

### ✓ Prep is a calm-day job

Do your real preparing on a sunny afternoon: set up the protectors, write the list, charge a spare battery. Then storm day is just following the plan you already made.

## What to unplug — and don't forget the data lines

The rule is simple: unplug what you'd hate to lose and don't need running through the storm. Here's what that usually means.

- The big television and its cable or streaming box — pull the power cord and the coax or cable line both.
- The computer, the printer, and the internet equipment — the modem and router — including the incoming cable or phone line.
- The game console, and any pricey electronics you'd be sorry to replace.
- Small treasures that are easy to grab — a nice sound system, a streaming stick you'd rather not lose.

### **! The data lines are the forgotten doorway**

A surge from a nearby strike can ride in on the cable or phone line just as easily as the power cord. Pulling only the power plug leaves that door open. Our lightning-safety guide explains why the data lines matter so much.

## What to leave running

Just as important as what to unplug is what to leave alone. A few things need to keep working right through the storm.

The refrigerator and freezer should stay plugged in — you want them holding temperature, and they shrug off small surges far better than electronics do. A whole-home protector, if you have one, is quietly guarding them anyway.

| Item                   | Storm plan              |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Refrigerator / freezer | Leave running           |
| Sump pump              | Leave on, plus a backup |
| Well pump              | Leave on, plus a backup |
| Medical equipment      | Leave on its own plan   |

✓ **The pumps need a backup, not an unplugging**

A sump or well pump has to keep working when a storm knocks the power out — so the plan there isn't unplugging, it's a backup-power source. Our backup-power and generator guides walk through that safely.

## Check your protectors' indicator lights

This one takes ten seconds and tells you whether your protection is actually protecting — or just quietly powering your devices.

Most surge protectors have a small indicator light, often labeled 'protected.' When it's lit — usually a steady green — the surge parts inside are still doing their job. If that light is out while the strip still has power, the protection is used up, and the strip should be replaced even though your devices still turn on.

Storm season is the perfect time for this glance, because a protector that's spent does you no good when the next surge arrives. If you find a dark light, swap that protector before the weather turns.

### ✓ There's a guide just for the lights

If the indicator lights ever puzzle you — some units also have a 'grounded' light — our guide on reading the indicator lights explains each one, and the when-to-replace guide covers timing.

## Charge up before the power might go

A storm can take the power with it. A few minutes of charging ahead of time keeps you connected and comfortable if it does.

- Top up your cell phone and any tablets, so you can reach people and check the forecast if the power drops.
- Charge any battery backups (UPS units) so they're full and ready to bridge an outage.
- Charge a portable power bank — a cheap one keeps a phone alive through a long outage.
- If someone uses a portable medical device with a battery, make sure its spares are charged.

### ✓ A habit worth tying to the forecast

When you first hear a storm is coming, plug the phones in. By the time it arrives, everything important is topped up and you've one less thing to think about.

## Keep a short list by the door

This is the single best trick in the whole guide, and it costs nothing but a scrap of paper.

Write down, once, the handful of things you unplug when a storm's coming — and where each one is. Tape it inside a cabinet door, or by the door you use most. Then, when the sky turns, you don't have to remember a thing; you just walk the list.

- ❑ List each treasure and its room, so nothing gets forgotten in the back bedroom.
- ❑ Note 'power AND data line' next to the TV and computer, so you pull both.
- ❑ Add a line to check the protector lights and charge the phones.
- ❑ Keep it somewhere obvious — a list you can't find is no help at all.

### ★ I'll help you write yours

On a visit I'll walk your home with you, settle your short list, and even label the plugs so unplugging is quick and clear. Then it's yours to keep. Call (330) 200-8042.

## A whole-home protector means less scrambling

If you have — or add — a whole-home protector at the panel, storm prep gets a good deal easier. Here's the honest picture.

A whole-home unit catches big surges right at your electrical panel, including ones from a nearby strike out on the lines, before they spread through the house. That means you're not depending on sprinting around unplugging everything — the everyday and nearby-strike stuff is handled in the background. It's a licensed electrician's job, covered in our whole-home surge protection guide.

But — and this is the honest part — it doesn't make unplugging pointless. Nothing plug-in or panel-mounted reliably survives a direct hit, so in a truly severe storm, pulling your crown jewels is still the smartest move. The whole-home unit just means you can be relaxed about it, not frantic.

### ✓ Less to do, not nothing to do

Think of a whole-home protector as trimming your storm list down to just the few treasures that deserve the extra care. That's a lovely place to be.

## Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

How much storm prep matters depends a lot on where you live — and a rural home on a well has more riding on it than a place in town.

### If you live in town or the suburbs

In town and the suburbs, outages tend to be shorter, and your water keeps flowing from the city main even when the power's out. Your storm prep is mostly about the electronics you'd hate to lose and staying comfortable through a brief outage.

- Run the quick routine: unplug the treasures, check the protector lights, charge the phones.
- City water means you don't have to plan around a pump losing power.
- A whole-home protector is still a fine upgrade that trims your storm list down.
- Shorter outages are likely, but the jolt when power returns is just as real — so leave treasures unplugged a few minutes after it's back.

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

Out in the country, outages run longer and help is farther away, so prep matters more. When the power quits, the well pump quits with it, and long overhead lines mean more exposure to nearby-strike surges in the first place.

- Plan the water side: a sump or well pump needs a backup-power source to keep going — see our backup-power and generator guides.
- Store some drinking water ahead of a big storm, since the well won't run without power.
- A whole-home protector is especially worthwhile out here, guarding the hardwired well pump and furnace a strip can't reach.
- Longer, fiercer storms make the unplugging habit and a charged backup battery pay off more often.

#### ★ Rural and want a solid storm plan?

Longer country outages are exactly why a little planning goes a long way. Tell me your setup and I'll help you build a calm routine — and coordinate the electrician or backup power if you want it. Call (330) 200-8042.

## Don't overlook the sump pump and well

For a lot of homes, the scariest part of a storm isn't a lost TV — it's a basement that floods or a tap that runs dry. That's the water side of storm prep.

A sump pump only helps if it keeps running, and storms are exactly when the power tends to fail. The plan there isn't to unplug it — it's to give it a backup-power source so it keeps pumping. The same goes for a well pump, which is what brings water into a rural home at all.

This crosses over into backup power, which is its own subject, so I won't go deep here. The point for storm prep is simply this: make sure the pumps have a plan before the season, not during the storm.

### ✓ See the backup-power guides

How to keep a pump running safely in an outage — with a battery backup or a properly hooked-up generator — is covered in our backup-power and generator guides. A generator must be installed and run safely, so those are worth a careful read.

## In a severe storm, unplug the crown jewels

Everything else in this guide is everyday routine. This page is the one extra step for the rare, violent storm.

When a fierce electrical storm is sitting right overhead — lightning and thunder almost together — that's when unplugging your most treasured, hardest-to-replace electronics really matters. No protector reliably survives a direct hit, but an unplugged device gives a surge no wire to travel. Pull the power cord and the data lines both.

### **! Unplug as it approaches, and mind yourself too**

Do your unplugging as the storm rolls in, not once it's raging — and never handle a device or outlet that looks or smells scorched. While the storm's overhead, stay off corded phones and wired devices, away from plumbing and water, and away from windows, until it passes. Our lightning-safety guide covers the personal side in full.

## Timing: do it early, not in the thick of it

When you run your routine matters almost as much as what's on it. Earlier is calmer and safer.

Give yourself a comfortable head start. When the forecast first turns or you hear thunder in the distance, that's your cue — charge the phones, glance at the protector lights, and unplug the treasures then. There's no reward for waiting until the storm is on top of you.

The same goes for plugging back in afterward: let the storm clearly pass, and give the power a few minutes to settle once it's steady, since the jolt when electricity returns after an outage can itself be a surge. A few minutes of patience sidesteps it.

### ✓ Early is easy; late is a scramble

Almost everything in this guide is easy if you start early and a scramble if you start late. When in doubt, run your routine sooner rather than later.

## And look after yourselves, too

Prep is about more than gadgets. A calm household is the best preparation of all, so here's the gentle personal side.

- ❑ During the storm, stay off corded phones and wired devices — a cell or cordless phone is fine.
- ❑ Keep away from plumbing and water: hold off on the shower and the dishes until it passes.
- ❑ Stay away from windows, and settle somewhere comfortable inside.
- ❑ Keep a flashlight where you can find it in the dark, and know where your candles or lanterns are — with care around open flame.

### **! People before things, always**

No television or computer is worth a risk to you. If a storm turns dangerous, look after yourself and your household first — the electronics can always be replaced. Our lightning-safety guide keeps this calm and simple.

## A quick look once the storm passes

The prep pays off after the storm, when a calm look-around usually finds everything just fine.

Once the weather's clearly moved on and the power's steady, plug your treasures back in. Glance at the surge protectors' lights, and notice anything that won't turn on, acts oddly, or smells burnt. A blinking clock on the microwave or oven just means the power blipped — nothing to fret over.

- Reset any tripped breaker, or a ground-fault (GFCI) outlet that needs its button pushed back in.
- Replace any surge protector whose 'protected' light has gone dark.
- Set aside anything scorched or electrical-smelling and don't use it.

### **! A burnt smell means stop**

Anything scorched, hot, or with an electrical smell is a stop-and-call moment — unplug it if you safely can and call a licensed electrician. Our after-a-surge guide walks the whole calm check, step by step.

## Common storm-prep mistakes

A few slip-ups come up again and again. Here's how to steer clear of them.

- **Unplugging the power cord but not the data lines** — the cable and phone lines are a wide-open path for a surge.
- **Unplugging the refrigerator** in a panic — leave it running; it's the electronics that need pulling.
- **Forgetting the pumps** — a sump or well pump needs a backup-power plan, not an unplugging.
- **Waiting until the storm is overhead** to start — run the routine early, while it's calm.
- **Trusting a spent protector** whose light is out — it still powers your gear but no longer protects it.

### **! Never daisy-chain to make room**

When you're plugging things back in, don't plug one power strip into another to gain outlets — it's a fire risk and undoes the protection. If you're short on outlets, that's a fixable thing I can help with.

## A simple storm-day kit

A little kit, kept together and ready, turns a storm from stressful into merely inconvenient.

None of this is fancy or expensive. It's just a handful of everyday things gathered in one spot, so you're not hunting for a flashlight by the glow of your phone.

| Kit item                | Why keep it         |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| The what-to-unplug list | No thinking needed  |
| A charged phone         | Stay reachable      |
| A flashlight            | For an outage       |
| A charged power bank    | Keeps a phone alive |
| A pump backup plan      | For long outages    |

✓ **Keep it all in one place**

A box, a drawer, a shelf by the door — wherever works, as long as it's the same place every time. Half of being prepared is simply knowing where things are.

## A sample 'what to unplug' list

To make this real, here's a list like the ones I help folks tape inside a cabinet door. Yours will be shorter or longer to fit your home.

- ❑ Living room: TV and cable box — power AND coax line.
- ❑ Office: computer, monitor, printer — and the modem and router, with the incoming line.
- ❑ Family room: game console and sound system.
- ❑ Anywhere: chargers for pricey gadgets you'd hate to lose.
- ❑ Then: check the protector lights, and charge the phones and power bank.
- ❑ Leave running: fridge, freezer, and the sump or well pump on its backup.

### ★ Want a list made for your home?

I'll walk through with you, write the list room by room, and label the plugs so it's quick every time. It's a small thing that brings real peace of mind. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

## Where to begin, without overthinking it

You don't need to do it all today. Here's a calm order for getting storm-ready.

**First**, make sure your sensitive electronics are on real surge protectors — with the data lines guarded — and glance at their indicator lights. That's the everyday protection that runs on its own. Then write your short 'what to unplug' list and put it where you'll see it.

**Then**, sort out the necessities: a backup-power plan for the pumps, a charged phone and power bank, and — when you're ready — a whole-home protector to trim your storm list down. None of it is urgent all at once; each piece you add makes the next storm easier.

### ★ A plan that fits your home

Tell me your home and what worries you most about storms, and I'll help you put things in a sensible order — starting with the easy wins. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

## How I can help

Getting a home storm-ready is exactly the kind of practical, worry-easing job I love to take off your plate.

I'll walk your home with you, set up good surge protectors on your sensitive electronics and their data lines, and label the plugs so unplugging is quick and clear. I'll write your 'what to unplug' list with you, show you the indicator lights, and help you get the phones and backups charging habit going.

For the bigger pieces — a whole-home protector at the panel, or a generator or backup-power setup for the pumps — I don't do the electrical work myself, but I'll help you understand it and line up a trustworthy licensed electrician, so the whole plan comes together.

### ★ Real help, close to home

A first in-home visit is a flat \$99, and for simple things I can often help over the phone or a screen-share for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

## Common Questions

The questions folks ask me most about getting ready for a storm, answered plainly.

### **Q: What exactly should I unplug before a storm?**

The things you'd hate to lose and don't need running: the TV and its cable box, the computer and network gear, the game console. Pull the power cord and the data lines, like the coax, on each one.

### **Q: Should I unplug the refrigerator too?**

No — leave the fridge and freezer running so they hold temperature. They handle small surges far better than electronics, and a whole-home protector guards them anyway. It's the sensitive electronics you pull.

### **Q: What about the sump pump or well pump?**

Don't unplug those — they need to keep running. The plan for them is a backup-power source so they work when the power fails. Our backup-power and generator guides cover how to do that safely.

### **Q: If I have a whole-home protector, do I still need to unplug?**

It means far less scrambling, since it handles the everyday and nearby-strike surges. But in a truly severe storm, unplugging your crown jewels is still smartest — nothing survives a direct hit for certain.

### **Q: How do I know my surge protectors are still good?**

Glance at the indicator light — usually a steady green when the protection is working. If it's out while the strip still has power, the protection is spent; replace it before storm season.

#### **★ Still have a question?**

That's what I'm here for. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and ask away — there's no such thing as a silly question about keeping your home safe.

## 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 storm season 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.

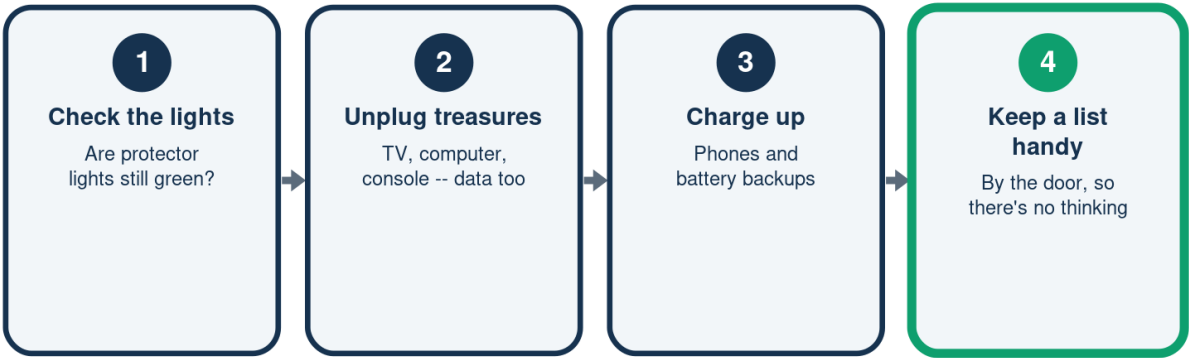
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

# Before the Storm

A calm routine you can run in minutes



Do it early, while it's calm -- not once the storm is overhead.

# Unplug It, or Leave It?

What to pull and what to keep running

|               | Do this           | Why                |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| TV / computer | Unplug it         | Costly, not needed |
| Refrigerator  | Leave it on       | Keeps food cold    |
| Sump pump     | Leave on + backup | Must keep pumping  |
| Game console  | Unplug it         | Costly, not needed |

Unplug the treasures; leave the necessities running.



## A Simple Storm Kit

A few everyday things, kept in one spot

|               | What it's for     | Handy when     |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Unplug list   | Saves thinking    | The storm hits |
| Charged phone | Stay reachable    | If lines drop  |
| Flashlight    | Light in the dark | In an outage   |
| Backup plan   | Sump and well     | Long outages   |

Half of being ready is simply knowing where things are.



## 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

---

### 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*



Book a visit —  
[billshometech.com/book](https://billshometech.com/book)

Use of these guides is subject to our Terms of Use ([billshometech.com/terms-of-use](https://billshometech.com/terms-of-use)).

**(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com**

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

For general information only — not professional advice. Use at your own risk. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech