BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

An Extended Guide · No. 1335

Backing Up Medical Equipment Safely

One caring layer of a bigger plan

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — panel work is a licensed electrician's job

A transfer switch connects to your home's electrical panel, and panel work is among the most dangerous jobs in any house. The power inside a panel can injure or kill even with the lights off, and a wiring mistake can start a fire or push deadly voltage back onto the lines outside, where a utility crew may be working. Installing, moving, or changing a transfer switch is a licensed electrician's job — almost always with a permit and an inspection. It is never a do-it-yourself project, and it is never something I do myself. This guide is here to help you understand, choose, and safely use a transfer switch — not to wire one. And please, never try to shortcut all this by backfeeding a generator through a wall or dryer outlet with a double-ended cord; that shortcut kills people, and a transfer switch is the safe, legal way to do the very thing it tempts you to do. Wiring the transfer switch is a licensed electrician's job. And for medical needs, please treat a generator as one layer of your plan — never the only one.

Backup power for the people who need it most

If someone in your home depends on powered medical equipment, an outage isn't just an inconvenience — it's a real concern. A transfer switch and generator can be part of your safety net, and this guide helps you build a plan around them, gently and thoroughly.

I'm Bill. I want to be careful and caring here, because this matters so much. The single most important idea in this whole guide is this: a generator is one layer of your plan, never the whole plan. Batteries, backup tanks, your utility, your doctor, and a plan to relocate all matter too.

I help set up and test the safe power hookup and coordinate the licensed electrician. I don't give medical advice — for that, your doctor, your equipment supplier, and your pharmacist are the right people, and I'll always point you to them.

★ Let's build a careful plan together

If someone in your home relies on powered equipment, I'm glad to help you plan the power side thoughtfully. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

The plan, on one page

If you remember only these, you have the shape of a good plan.

- ❑ A generator is one layer of your plan — never rely on it alone.
- ❑ Keep manufacturer-approved battery backups and car adapters, charged and ready.
- ❑ Oxygen users: keep backup tanks from your supplier that need no power.
- ❑ Register with your utility's medical or priority list, and tell your equipment supplier your plan.
- ❑ Prefer clean inverter power for sensitive devices; a UPS can bridge the gap while you start the generator.
- ❑ If equipment fails and backup runs low — or someone struggles to breathe, has chest pain, confusion, or blue lips — call 911.

! When in doubt, call 911

No backup plan replaces emergency care. If someone is in medical distress, call 911 first and sort out the power afterward.

A generator is one layer, not the whole plan

This is the heart of everything, so let's sit with it a moment.

A transfer switch and generator can keep medical equipment powered through a long outage — that's genuinely valuable. But generators can fail to start, run out of fuel, or need refueling, and it takes a few minutes to get one going after the power drops. So they can't be your only safeguard for something a life depends on. The safe approach layers several protections, so if any one fails, others hold.

> **✔ Layers, not a single lifeline**
> Think batteries plus backup tanks plus the generator plus a relocation plan. Each covers the others' gaps.

Keep battery backups ready

Batteries cover the instant the power drops and the minutes before a generator is running.

For equipment that offers it, keep manufacturer-approved battery backups and any car-adapter options, charged and within reach. These bridge the gap between a power failure and your generator coming online, and they cover you if the generator has trouble. Follow the manufacturer's guidance on which batteries are approved and how long they last — and keep spares charged during storm season.

> **✔ Charged and within reach**
> A battery backup only helps if it's charged and easy to find. Keep them topped up and stored where you can grab them in the dark.

For oxygen: tanks that need no power

Oxygen deserves special mention, because there's a backup that doesn't rely on electricity at all.

If someone uses an oxygen concentrator, ask your oxygen supplier about backup oxygen tanks — these deliver oxygen without any power, so they work even if both the grid and the generator are down. Keep enough on hand for a long outage, know how to switch to them, and keep any portable concentrator's batteries charged. Your supplier can tell you how much backup to keep and how to use it safely.

> **! Ask your oxygen supplier for backup tanks**
> Backup oxygen tanks need no electricity, so they're a vital layer. Ask your supplier how many to keep and how to switch to them.

Register with your utility

Many power companies keep a list of homes with medical needs — get on it.

Most utilities maintain a medical or priority-restoration list for customers who depend on powered medical equipment. Being on it can mean advance notice of planned outages and, sometimes, priority when power is restored. It doesn't replace your own backups, but it's a free, worthwhile layer. Call your electric company and ask how to register, and renew it if they require that periodically.

> **★ I'll help you get registered**
> If you're not sure how to get on your utility's medical list, I'm glad to help you make that call. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Planning matters everywhere, but the details shift between an in-town home and a rural one — mainly outage length and distance to help.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, outages are often shorter and help is closer, but never let that lull you into relying on the grid alone for something a life needs. Layer your backups regardless.

- Shorter outages still require battery and tank backups — power can fail without warning.
- Help is nearer, but a relocation plan to a friend, family member, or facility with power is still wise.
- Register with your utility even in town.
- A transfer switch keeps equipment powered through the occasional longer outage.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, outages run longer and help is farther away, so a medical power plan deserves extra depth — more backup supplies, more fuel, and a clear plan to get to power or care if needed.

- Longer rural outages mean more battery capacity and more backup oxygen on hand.
- Farther from a hospital — know your route and have a relocation plan ready.
- Store extra generator fuel for extended runs.
- Tell neighbors or nearby family so someone can check on you in a long outage.

> **★ Rural home with medical needs?**
> Distance makes planning matter more. I'll help you build a thorough, layered plan for a rural home. Call (330) 200-8042.

Clean power for sensitive devices

Some medical devices are particular about the kind of power they receive.

Sensitive electronics — and many medical devices are sensitive — run best on clean, stable power. An inverter generator produces that kind of steady power, which is why it's often preferred where medical equipment is involved. If you use a conventional generator, a UPS (battery unit) between it and the device can help smooth things and bridge gaps. Check your equipment's instructions or ask the manufacturer about what kind of power it needs.

> **✔ Inverter power is gentler on electronics**
> For sensitive medical devices, an inverter generator's clean power — or a UPS in between — helps protect the equipment. Ask the maker what it needs.

Tell your doctor and equipment supplier

The people who know the medical side should know your power plan.

Let your doctor and your equipment supplier know that you're planning for outages, and ask them for guidance specific to the equipment and the person who relies on it. They can tell you how long the device can safely be without power, what backups they recommend, and what warning signs to watch for. This is medical guidance, which is theirs to give — my role is the safe power hookup, not the medical advice.

> **★ I stay in my lane — gladly**
> I'll handle the power planning and point you to your doctor and supplier for the medical side. That teamwork keeps you safest. (330) 200-8042.

Where the transfer switch fits in

With the layers in place, here's the valuable job the switch does.

Once your batteries and backup tanks cover the immediate gap, the transfer switch and generator can power medical equipment through a long outage — hours or days that batteries alone couldn't cover. If the device plugs in, you may power it by cord or through the switch; if it's tied to a hardwired circuit, the switch handles it. Either way, the generator is your endurance layer, keeping equipment running long after batteries would fade.

> **✔ The generator is your endurance**
> Batteries and tanks cover the first minutes and hours; the generator carries you through the long haul. Together they cover the whole outage.

A UPS to bridge the gap

For plug-in devices, a small battery unit can cover the start-up minutes seamlessly.

A UPS — an uninterruptible power supply — is a battery unit you plug a device into; when the power drops, it keeps the device running instantly for a while, with no interruption. For a medical device that shouldn't blink off even for a moment, a UPS can bridge the few minutes it takes you to start the generator. It's a modest, worthwhile layer for the right device — check that the device and UPS are compatible, and ask the maker if you're unsure.

> **✔ No-blink coverage for the startup**
> A UPS keeps a device running the instant power drops, covering the gap until your generator is going. Confirm compatibility with the device maker.

Medication that must stay cold

If a medication needs refrigeration, that's part of your power plan too.

Insulin and some other medicines must stay cold. Keep them in the fridge with the door closed, watch the temperature with an appliance thermometer, and follow your pharmacist's guidance on how warm is too warm and for how long. Our fridge-and-freezer guide covers keeping the refrigerator cold during an outage. When in doubt about a medication's safety, call your pharmacist rather than guessing.

> **! Ask your pharmacist about your medicine**
> Different medicines tolerate different temperatures and times. For refrigerated medication, your pharmacist's guidance is the one to follow.

Put the plan in writing

A calm, written plan means no one has to think it all through in a stressful moment.

- ❑ List each piece of powered equipment and how long its battery lasts.
- ❑ Note where the batteries, tanks, chargers, and adapters are kept.
- ❑ Write the steps to switch to backups and to start the generator.
- ❑ Include phone numbers: doctor, equipment supplier, pharmacist, utility, and 911.
- ❑ Note your relocation plan — where to go if you need power or care.

> **★ I'll help you write it down**
> A clear, big-print plan posted where the household can find it is invaluable. I'm glad to help you build one. Call (330) 200-8042.

When to call 911 and relocate

The most important page: no backup plan replaces emergency care.

If powered equipment fails and your backups are running low, or if someone shows signs of trouble — difficulty breathing, chest pain, confusion, or bluish lips — call 911 right away. Don't wait to troubleshoot the generator. Have a plan to relocate to somewhere with power — a family member's home, a facility, or wherever your care team advises — if an outage runs long or your backups won't last. People come first, always; the equipment and the power can be sorted out after.

> **! People first — always**
> If someone is in distress, call 911 first. A generator can wait; a person cannot. Keep a relocation plan ready for long outages.

Test the whole setup calmly

Practice the plan on a calm day so it's familiar when it matters.

With everything installed, do a calm test: confirm the equipment runs on generator power, practice switching to battery backups and backup tanks, and time how the transition goes. Make sure everyone in the household knows the plan and where the supplies are. Testing turns a written plan into confidence — and reveals anything to fix before a real outage, not during one.

> **★ Let's practice it together**
> I'm glad to walk through the whole power plan with you and the household on a calm day. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

What I do, and what I leave to your care team

Clear roles matter most where health is involved.

- **What I help with:** planning the power side, coordinating the licensed electrician, setting up and testing the safe hookup, and helping you register with the utility.
- **What your care team handles:** all medical questions — your doctor, equipment supplier, and pharmacist.
- **What only a licensed electrician does:** the panel wiring.
- **What comes first, always:** calling 911 in an emergency.

> **★ The power side is mine to help with**
> I'll never give medical advice, but I'll make the power planning thorough and calm, and point you to the right medical people. (330) 200-8042.

Common mistakes to avoid

A few missteps to steer clear of when planning medical backup.

- **Relying on the generator alone** — always layer with batteries and tanks.
- **Letting battery backups sit uncharged** — keep them topped up during storm season.
- **Not registering** with the utility's medical list.
- **Skipping a relocation plan** for long outages.
- **Troubleshooting instead of calling 911** when someone is in distress.

> **! Never delay emergency care**
> The most serious mistake is fussing with equipment while someone struggles. In distress, call 911 first — every time.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about backing up medical equipment.

Q: Can I rely on a generator to power my medical equipment?
Treat it as one layer, not the whole plan. Generators can fail to start or run low, so pair it with charged battery backups, backup tanks for oxygen, and a relocation plan.

Q: Should I get an inverter generator for medical devices?
Inverter generators produce cleaner, steadier power that's gentler on sensitive electronics, so they're often preferred. Ask your device's maker what kind of power it needs.

Q: How do I get on my utility's medical list?
Call your electric company and ask how to register for their medical or priority-restoration program. I'm glad to help you make the call.

Q: What should I do if the power's out and someone can't breathe?
Call 911 immediately — don't wait to fix the generator. People come first; the power can be sorted out afterward.

> **★ Careful planning, together**
> This is important, and I'll take the time to get the power side right with you. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

How I help — carefully

When health is on the line, I take extra care and stay firmly in my lane.

I'll help you plan a layered power setup, coordinate a licensed electrician for a safe hookup, help you register with your utility, and practice the whole plan on a calm day so it's second nature. I'll point you to your doctor, supplier, and pharmacist for every medical question. My job is to make the power side dependable and the plan clear — so you can focus on the person who matters.

> **★ Let's make the plan solid**
> Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we'll build a careful, layered power plan for your household's medical needs.

One more vital safety word

Powering medical equipment means running the generator, so the biggest generator danger still applies.

! Read this first — carbon monoxide is the real danger

A running generator's exhaust contains carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill in minutes. Never run a generator indoors, in a garage, in a shed, or on a porch, not even with the door open and a fan going. Run it outside only, well away from the house — the safety agencies say at least 20 feet — with the exhaust pointed away from every window, door, and vent. Put battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on each floor and outside the bedrooms. If an alarm sounds, or anyone feels dizzy, sick, or sleepy, get everyone into fresh air first and ask questions later. Carbon monoxide is especially dangerous around anyone with breathing or heart conditions — the generator runs outdoors only, far from the house, with tested CO alarms inside, every time.

The short version to carry with you

If the details blur, hold onto these.

- ❑ A generator is one layer — pair it with charged batteries, backup tanks, and a relocation plan.
- ❑ Register with your utility, and tell your doctor and supplier your plan.
- ❑ Prefer clean inverter power; a UPS can bridge the startup gap for plug-in devices.
- ❑ If someone is in distress, call 911 first — people before equipment, always.

> **✔ Keep this guide handy**
> If your household has medical needs, keep this guide — and your written plan — somewhere everyone can find them.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

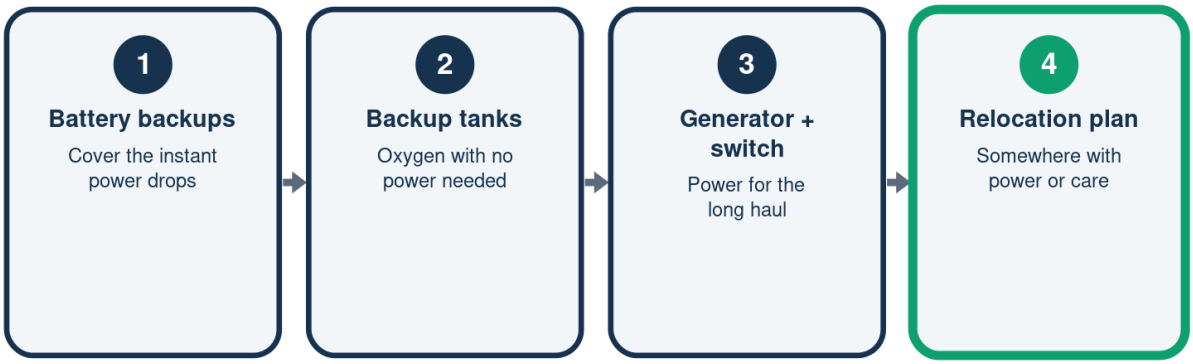
I hope this guide made planning backup power for medical equipment feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

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

Layers of a Medical Power Plan

A generator is one layer, never the only one



If any one layer fails, the others hold.

Keeping Backups Ready

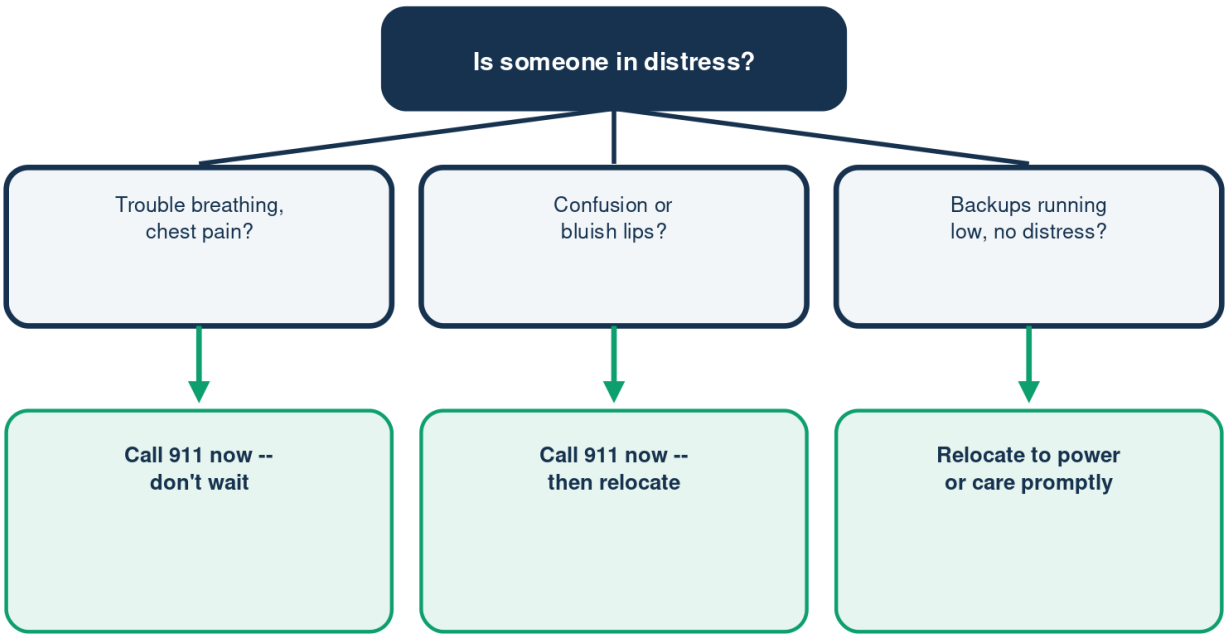
What to have on hand and charged

	Have ready	Keep in mind
Batteries	Charged, within reach	Know their run time
Oxygen tanks	Enough for a long one	Ask your supplier
A UPS	For no-blink devices	Confirm compatibility
Utility list	Register your home	Renew if required

Ask your doctor and supplier for guidance specific to the device.

When to Call 911

People before equipment, always

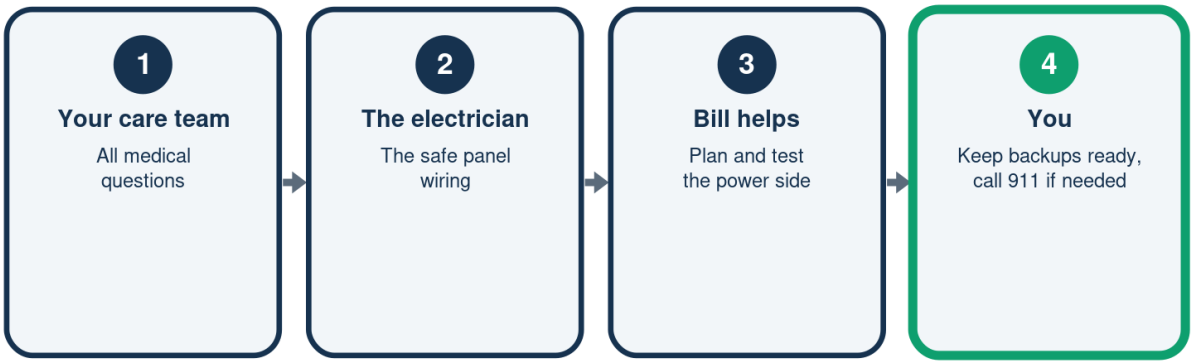


No backup plan replaces emergency care -- call 911 first.

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

Who Does What

Everyone in their right lane



Bill helps with power, never medical advice -- that's your care team.

BILL'S HOME TECH

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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.

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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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