



An Extended Guide · No. 1340

Getting Ready Before the Storm

The calm outage is the
one you prepared for

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. Your transfer switch was installed by a licensed electrician; readiness is all the simple, safe preparation you do around it.

The calm outage is the one you prepared for

The difference between a stressful outage and a calm one is almost always what you did beforehand. This guide is your readiness checklist — the simple steps that make the next storm a non-event.

I'm Bill. Over the years I've noticed that the folks who sail through outages aren't the ones with the fanciest equipment — they're the ones who prepared. Fresh fuel, a tested setup, written steps, a practice run under their belt. None of it is hard, and all of it pays off the moment the lights flicker.

Think of this guide as pulling together the readiness pieces from across the whole set into one calm checklist you can work through before storm season — and again when a big one's forecast.

★ Want to get storm-ready together?

I'm glad to come help you work through a readiness checklist and do a practice run. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Readiness, on one page

If you remember only these, you're ready for the next storm.

- ❑ Keep fresh, stabilized fuel stored safely — and enough of it.
- ❑ Exercise the generator so it starts willingly when you need it.
- ❑ Keep the cord accessible and inspected, and the inlet cover clear.
- ❑ Test your carbon-monoxide alarms and keep the written steps posted in big print.
- ❑ Do a daylight practice run, with the whole household.
- ❑ For wells, store drinking water; plan food and any medical needs ahead.

✓ Prepared beats powerful

The calmest outages belong to the best-prepared homes, not the ones with the biggest generators. Readiness is the real advantage.

Outages are won beforehand

Everything is easier when the pieces are already in place.

When the power goes out, you don't want to be hunting for the cord, discovering the fuel's gone stale, or trying to remember the steps for the first time in the dark. Every bit of preparation you do on a calm day is one less thing to figure out under stress. Readiness turns an outage from an emergency into a routine — roll out the generator, follow your posted steps, and carry on.

✓ Prepare on calm days

Do your readiness work on a sunny afternoon, not when a storm's already howling. Calm preparation makes for calm outages.

Fuel: fresh, safe, and enough

Stale or insufficient fuel is the most common outage frustration — head it off.

Keep enough fuel stored safely to run your generator through an outage of the length your area tends to see, plus a modest reserve. Keep it fresh — rotate it, use stabilizer as directed, and run the generator now and then so fuel moves through it. Store fuel in approved containers, away from the house and any heat or flame, per safe-storage guidance. Fresh fuel in the right amount is half the battle.

! Store fuel safely

Keep fuel in approved containers, detached from the house, away from heat, flame, and pilot lights. Follow safe-storage guidance and your generator's manual.

A generator that's ready to go

An exercised, maintained generator is a generator that starts when you need it.

Run your generator occasionally under some load, keep up with its oil and service per the manual, and — if it's electric-start — keep the battery charged. Confirm it's clean, dry, and stored where you can get it out easily. Our maintenance-and-testing guide covers the routine; the readiness point is simple: don't let it sit untouched for a year and then expect it to spring to life in a storm.

✓ Don't let it sit idle

The classic outage disappointment is a generator that won't start because it sat unused. A little exercise prevents it.

The cord and inlet, ready to use

The connection should be effortless when the moment comes.

- ❑ Store the cord loosely coiled, dry, and easy to grab in the dark.
- ❑ Inspect the cord end to end for damage; replace it if cut or cracked.
- ❑ Keep the outdoor inlet cover clear of leaves, ice, and webs.
- ❑ Confirm the generator's spot is clear and the cord reaches with slack.
- ❑ Keep the cord with the generator and your written steps if you can.

✓ Everything in one spot

Store the generator, cord, and step sheet together, so setup is grab-and-go rather than a scavenger hunt.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Readiness looks a little different in town than out on a well — mostly in water and fuel reserves.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town, with city water and typically shorter outages, your readiness focuses on heat, food, light, and having the setup tested and the steps posted.

- Keep the furnace circuit ready and tested for winter.
- Prep the fridge and freezer (pre-chill, freeze water jugs).
- A modest fuel reserve usually covers a shorter in-town outage.
- Post the steps and do a practice run so anyone can manage it.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, longer outages and a well mean deeper readiness: more stored water, more fuel, and a plan for the well pump, sump pump, and any animals.

- Store several days of drinking water — when the pump stops, so does your water.
- Keep a larger, rotated fuel reserve for longer rural outages.
- Plan for the well pump, sump pump, and livestock water in your readiness.
- Tell a neighbor or family member your plan so someone can check on you.

★ Rural readiness feel like a lot?

I'll help you build a thorough readiness plan for a well home — water, fuel, pumps, and all. Call (330) 200-8042.

Test your carbon-monoxide alarms

This is the readiness step that protects lives, so it never gets skipped.

! 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. Before storm season, test the battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms on every level and outside sleeping areas, and replace batteries as needed — they're your safety net whenever the generator runs.

Post your steps in big print

You should never have to recall the sequence from memory in the dark.

Keep a written copy of your switch-over steps — start the generator, connect, flip, bring circuits up one at a time, switch back — taped near your transfer switch in large, clear print. Add your load routine and any notes from your electrician. When an outage hits, a glance at the posted steps beats trying to remember, especially under stress or by flashlight. Our using-during-an-outage guide has the full sequence to copy from.

★ I'll make your step sheet

I'm glad to make you a big-print, taped-up step sheet tailored to your exact switch. Call (330) 200-8042.

Do a daylight practice run

Practice is what turns steps on paper into calm confidence.

At least once — ideally before each storm season — run through the whole sequence in daylight, with anyone else who might need to operate it. Start the generator, connect, flip the switch, bring up your circuits, and switch back. It doubles as your seasonal test, confirming everything works. A practice run reveals anything to fix while it's easy, and it means the real thing feels familiar rather than frightening.

✓ Practice with the household

Include your spouse or a nearby family member. If you're ever away or unwell during an outage, they'll be glad they practiced too.

Keep your must-run list handy

Knowing what to power, and in what order, keeps an outage orderly.

Keep a copy of your prioritized must-run list with your steps — what to bring up first (the biggest surging load), then the essentials, then comfort if there's room. Having it written down means you won't forget the well pump or overload the generator by turning on too much. Our choosing-your-circuits and load-management guides cover building and using that list.

✓ Order, written down

A written load order — biggest first, essentials next — takes the guesswork out of a stressful moment.

Store water if you're on a well

For well homes, water is a readiness item every bit as important as fuel.

Even with a generator that powers your well pump, store several days of drinking water for everyone in the household and any animals — in case of fuel or generator trouble, or moments you'd rather not run the pump. Refresh it periodically so it stays good. It's simple, cheap insurance, and it means a hiccup with the generator never leaves you without water. Our well-pump guide covers the whole rural water picture.

✓ A few days' water, always on hand

Stored drinking water is the backup to your backup. Keep several days' worth, refreshed now and then.

Get the fridge and freezer ready

A little food prep before a storm protects your groceries and your budget.

- **Pre-chill** the fridge and freezer a bit colder before a coming storm.
- **Freeze water jugs** to fill freezer gaps and provide backup cold.
- **Keep appliance thermometers** in both, so you can judge food safety.
- **Get out** what you'll want early, so you open the doors less during the outage.
- **Know the safe-time windows** from our fridge-and-freezer guide.

✓ A full, cold freezer coasts longer

Prepping the freezer before a storm buys you hours of extra safe time for your food.

Have your medical plan ready

If anyone relies on powered equipment or refrigerated medicine, readiness matters most of all.

Before storm season, make sure battery backups are charged, backup oxygen tanks are on hand, you're registered with your utility's medical list, and your written medical power plan is posted and current. Confirm everyone knows the plan and where the supplies are, and keep the relocation plan and phone numbers handy. Our medical-equipment guide walks through building this layered plan — readiness is simply keeping it current and rehearsed.

! Charged, stocked, and rehearsed

For medical needs, readiness means charged batteries, stocked backup tanks, a current written plan, and a household that's practiced it. Keep 911 and your care team's numbers handy.

When a big storm is forecast

On top of your seasonal readiness, a few last-minute steps when one's coming.

- ❑ Top off your fuel and confirm the generator's ready.
- ❑ Bring the cord and step sheet to where you'll need them.
- ❑ Pre-chill the fridge and freezer; fill some water containers.
- ❑ Charge phones, devices, and any medical battery backups.
- ❑ Review the steps, and make sure the household knows the plan.

✓ A calm hour before the storm

An hour of preparation before a forecasted storm turns a potential scramble into a calm, ready wait.

A simple readiness kit

Beyond the generator, a small kit rounds out your readiness.

Keep flashlights and lanterns with fresh batteries (candles are a fire risk — prefer battery light), a battery or hand-crank radio for information, phone chargers and a charged power bank, warm blankets, some easy no-cook food and manual can opener, and a first-aid kit. Store it where you can find it in the dark. None of it is fancy, but together it makes an outage comfortable rather than miserable while your generator handles the big stuff.

✓ **Battery light, not candles**

Skip the candles — an open flame in an outage is a fire risk. Flashlights and battery lanterns are safer and brighter.

Make sure the household is ready too

Readiness isn't just yours — share it with everyone at home.

Make sure a spouse, adult child, or anyone else at home knows where the generator, cord, and step sheet are, and how to run the basic sequence and load routine. If you're the one who's away, ill, or asleep when an outage hits, someone else can carry on. A transfer switch's labeled simplicity makes this genuinely achievable — but only if you've shown them and, ideally, practiced together.

★ I'll teach the whole household

I'm glad to walk your whole family through the setup so anyone can handle an outage. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about getting ready.

Q: How much fuel should I keep on hand?

Enough to run your generator through an outage of the length your area tends to see, plus a modest reserve — kept fresh and stored safely. Rural homes generally keep more, for longer outages.

Q: How often should I practice?

At least before each storm season — a daylight practice run that doubles as your seasonal test. Include anyone who might need to operate it.

Q: What's the most-forgotten readiness step?

Fresh fuel and an exercised generator — the classic 'it won't start' surprise. For wells, stored drinking water is a close second.

Q: What should I do when a storm is forecast?

Top off fuel, ready the cord and steps, pre-chill the fridge and freezer, charge devices and medical backups, and review the plan with the household.

★ Want a readiness check?

Call or text (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you make sure you're truly ready for the next one.

How I help you get ready

Readiness is exactly the kind of practical, caring help I love to provide.

I'll help you build a readiness checklist for your home, make a big-print step sheet, do a daylight practice run with the household, check your fuel and cord, and make sure your CO alarms and any medical plan are current. I'll set it up so your seasonal readiness is a quick, familiar routine — and so the next storm is something you're ready for rather than dreading.

★ Let's get you storm-ready

Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we'll turn readiness into a simple routine you do with confidence.

Make it a twice-a-year habit

Readiness isn't one-and-done — it's a light seasonal rhythm.

Tie your readiness to the seasons: a fuller check before storm season in spring, and again before winter. Each time, run through fuel, the generator, the cord and inlet, the CO alarms, your steps and list, stored water, and any medical plan. It takes an hour or two, twice a year, and it keeps everything current as your needs and equipment change. That gentle rhythm is what keeps you genuinely ready, year after year.

✓ Spring and fall, like clockwork

Two readiness checks a year — spring and fall — keep you prepared without it ever feeling like a chore.

The short version to carry with you

If the details blur, hold onto these.

- ❑ Fresh fuel, an exercised generator, and an accessible, inspected cord.
- ❑ Tested CO alarms, big-print steps posted, and a daylight practice run.
- ❑ For wells: stored water; prep food; keep any medical plan current.
- ❑ When a storm's forecast, top off fuel and ready everything an hour ahead.

✓ Keep this guide handy

Use the checklists here each spring and fall — keep this guide with your home papers as your reminder.

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 your home storm-ready 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.

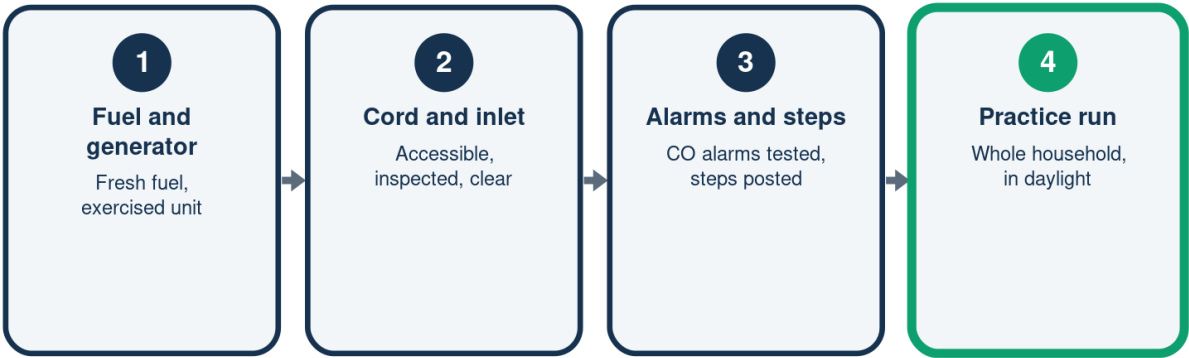
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

The Readiness Checklist

Done on a calm day, before you need it



For wells, add stored water; plan food and medical needs too.

Seasonal vs. Storm-Forecast Prep

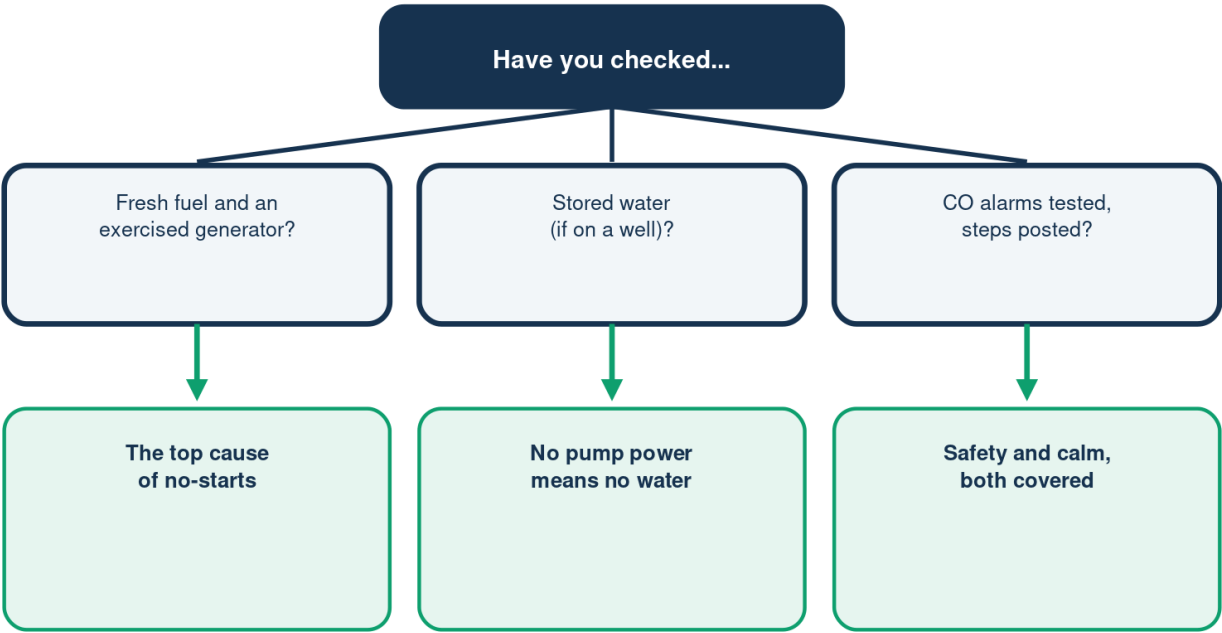
Two kinds of readiness

	Each season	When a storm's coming
Fuel	Stock and rotate	Top it off
Generator	Exercise, service	Confirm it's ready
Fridge/freezer	Keep thermometers	Pre-chill, freeze jugs
Household	Practice the plan	Review it, charge devices

A calm hour before a forecasted storm prevents a scramble.

Are You Really Ready?

The most-forgotten items

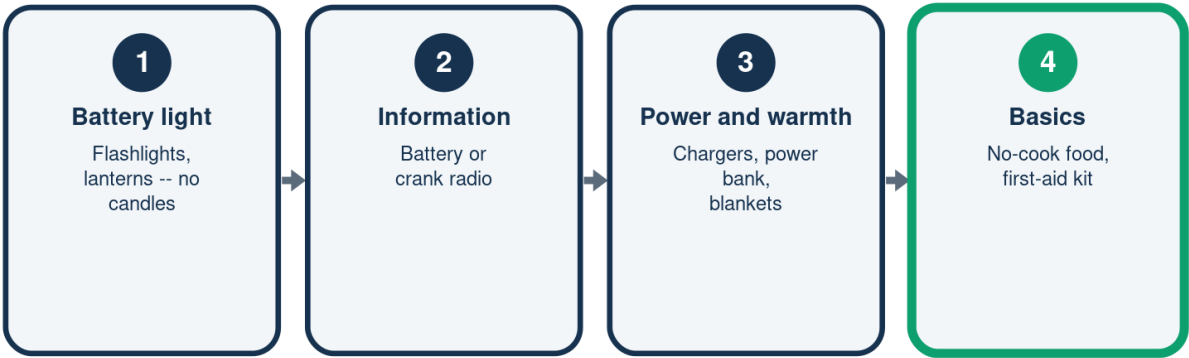


The classic surprise is a generator that won't start -- exercise it and keep fuel fresh.

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

A Simple Readiness Kit

The little things that make it comfortable



Store it where you can find it in the dark.



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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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