



An Extended Guide · No. 1801

Keeping Your Home Phone Working in an Outage

Why an internet phone goes
dead — and how a UPS saves it

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — what a UPS can and can't do

First, the honest picture, so a UPS never disappoints you. A UPS — an uninterruptible power supply — is a battery backup box. When the power blinks or goes out, it keeps small electronics like your computer, your modem and router, or a medical monitor running without a flicker. But it is a short bridge, not a whole-home generator: it buys you minutes, not hours — time to save your work and shut down gently, keep the internet up through a brief blip, or ride you over until a generator or a portable power station takes over. Plug only small electronics into the battery side. Never plug in a laser printer, a space heater, a hair dryer, a microwave, a sump pump, or anything that makes heat or has a big motor — they draw far too much and can overload or damage the unit. A UPS has a sealed battery inside, so set it where a little warmth can escape, not sealed in a cabinet, and keep it dry. That battery wears out every few years and gets swapped and recycled at a battery drop-off — never put it in the household trash. If your home phone runs through the internet, it goes dead when the power does — unless the gear behind it is on a UPS. This guide keeps your phone working.

Keeping your home phone working when the power's out

Years ago, the phone on the wall kept working in a blackout. Today, most home phones run through the internet — so when the power goes, the phone goes silent too. A UPS on the right gear brings that lifeline back.

I'm Bill, from Bill's Home Tech in Portage County, Ohio. This is one of the most important guides in the set, because a working phone in an outage can matter a great deal — for reaching family, or for calling for help. Let's make sure yours keeps working.

We'll go gently and plainly: why phones changed, how to tell what you have, what to put on a UPS, and a simple backup so you're never without a way to call out.

★ A phone that works when you need it

This is exactly the kind of quiet, important setup I love helping folks with. If you'd like a hand making sure your phone survives an outage, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole idea, on one page

If you read nothing else, here's how to keep a phone in an outage.

- ❑ Most home phones now run through the internet, so they die when the power does.
- ❑ Put the modem, router, and phone box (adapter or base) on a UPS to keep the phone alive.
- ❑ A cordless handset's base needs power too — a corded handset is better in an outage.
- ❑ Always keep a charged cell phone as a second way to call out.
- ❑ Know that an internet phone still needs the internet — a wide outage can cut it.
- ❑ Make sure your address is on file with an internet-phone service for 911.

✓ Two ways to call beats one

The safest plan is a home phone on a UPS AND a charged cell. If one path is down, you still have the other.

Why your phone dies now, but didn't used to

It's not your imagination — the phone itself changed.

The old copper phone line carried its own power from the phone company, so a corded phone kept working even in a blackout. Today, most home phone service runs over the internet — often called VoIP — through your modem and router. Those run on your wall power, so when the power fails, the phone loses its connection right along with it.

✓ The trade we didn't notice

Internet phone service is cheaper and full of features, but it quietly gave up the old line's built-in power. A UPS gives that safety net back.

Which kind of phone do you have?

A minute of checking tells you whether you're at risk in an outage.

- **Plugged into the modem/router or a small box** — that's an internet phone; it needs a UPS to survive an outage.
- **Bundled with your cable or internet bill** — almost always an internet phone.
- **A true old copper line** — rare now, but if you have one, a corded phone may still work in an outage.
- **A cell phone only** — no home phone to worry about, but keep it charged and read on.

★ Not sure? I'll help you tell

Send me a photo of where your phone cord goes — into the wall, or into a box near your internet gear — and I'll tell you which kind you have and what to do about it.

The chain that carries your call

Knowing the path helps you see what needs power.

An internet phone call travels a little chain: the internet comes in through your modem, the router shares it, and a phone adapter or base turns it into a dial tone for your handset. Every link in that chain runs on wall power. Keep the whole chain powered and your phone works; let any link go dark and the dial tone disappears.

✓ Power the whole chain

It's not enough to power just the phone base — the modem and router ahead of it must stay on too, or there's no internet for the call to ride.

What to put on the UPS

The short list that keeps your dial tone alive.

- **The modem** — where the internet enters.
- **The router** — often the same box as the modem.
- **The phone adapter or base** — the box that makes your dial tone.
- **A fiber box (ONT)**, if you have fiber — it needs power too.

All of these go on the UPS's battery-backup outlets. Because they sip power, even a modest UPS keeps a phone line alive for a good while — this is one of the lightest, longest-lasting jobs a UPS can do.

Cordless handsets need power, too

A catch that surprises people at the worst moment.

A cordless phone's handset charges on a base station that plugs into the wall. When the power fails, that base stops working — so even with the internet gear on a UPS, a cordless phone can go dead. Either put the cordless base on the UPS as well, or keep a simple corded handset that doesn't need its own power.

! A cordless phone can fail even with internet up

If your only phone is cordless and its base loses power, you can't call out even though the line is fine. Power the base, or keep a corded phone for outages.

Keep a corded backup handset

An old-fashioned idea that's still one of the best.

A basic corded phone — the kind with the handset tethered to the base by a cord — needs no power of its own. Plugged into your phone adapter, it will work as long as the internet gear on the UPS keeps the line alive. It's inexpensive, it lives in a drawer until you need it, and it takes one worry off the table.

✓ A five-dollar peace of mind

Tuck a simple corded phone away with your outage supplies. When the power goes and the cordless is dead, that plain handset just works.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

A working phone matters everywhere, but the stakes and the outages differ between town and country.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, outages are usually short, and cell coverage is generally strong — so your phone plan can be simpler.

- A UPS on the internet gear keeps your home phone through the usual short outages.
- A charged cell phone is a reliable second option, since towns usually have good coverage.
- Keep a corded handset in case a cordless base loses power.
- Confirm your address is on file for internet-phone 911.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a private well, outages run longer and cell coverage can be spotty — so a working home phone is a bigger deal.

- Keep the modem, router, and phone base on a UPS sized for longer runtime.
- Don't rely on a cell alone if your signal is weak; the home phone on a UPS may be your best line.
- Plan to recharge the UPS from a generator or power station in a long outage, so the phone holds.
- If a medical alert base is in the home, keeping it powered is especially important — see our medical guide.

★ Let's make sure you can always call out

I'll help you set up a home phone that survives an outage and a simple cell backup, and test the whole thing. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Your cell phone as a backup

Even with a home phone on a UPS, a charged cell is a wise second line.

A cell phone doesn't depend on your home internet, so it's a natural backup — as long as it's charged and you have a signal. Keep it topped up, and keep a way to recharge it in a long outage: a small power bank or a car charger. Cell towers often have some backup power of their own, though it isn't guaranteed in a long, wide outage.

✓ Charge it before the storm

When bad weather is coming, top off your cell phone and any power bank. A full charge before an outage is worth a great deal during one.

911 and internet phones

One important thing to check before you ever need it.

With an internet phone, a 911 call reaches the right dispatcher based on the address your provider has on file — it doesn't always know where you are automatically the way the old line did. Make sure your correct home address is registered with your phone service, and if you ever move the gear, update it.

! Check your 911 address is on file

Call your internet-phone provider, or check your online account, and confirm your service address is correct. It's a five-minute task that matters most on the day you hope never comes. In any emergency, a charged cell phone is also a dependable way to reach 911.

A word about medical alert bases

If a loved one wears an alert pendant, its base station needs your attention.

Many medical alert systems have a base station in the home that calls for help over the phone line or the internet. If that base runs through your internet, it needs the same backup power as your phone — on a UPS — so the pendant can still call out in an outage. Many bases also have their own small built-in battery; a UPS adds a valuable extra layer.

★ Let's protect the alert base together

This is important enough to get right. Our 'UPS for a medical monitor or alert base' guide covers it fully, and I'm glad to set it up and test it with you so it works when it's truly needed.

Setting it up, step by step

No wiring — just a UPS and a couple of plugs.

- ❑ Let the UPS charge fully first.
- ❑ Plug the modem, router, and phone box into the battery-backup outlets.
- ❑ If your handset is cordless, put its base on a battery outlet too.
- ❑ Keep a corded handset on hand as a simple backup.
- ❑ Confirm your 911 address is on file with your provider.
- ❑ Charge a cell phone and a power bank as your second line.

That's the whole setup. If you'd like me to do it and test it with you, it's a quick, reassuring visit.

Test your outage phone plan

A plan you've tested is a plan you can trust.

- ☐ With everyone's okay, briefly unplug the UPS from the wall.
- ☐ Pick up the home phone and listen for a dial tone.
- ☐ Make a quick call to a family member to confirm it goes through.
- ☐ Check the cordless handset works — or reach for the corded one.
- ☐ Plug the UPS back in and note how it did.

✓ Test on a calm day

Run this little test on an ordinary afternoon, not during a storm. Once you've seen it work, you'll trust it when it counts.

What a UPS can't do

An honest limit, so your plan has a backup.

A UPS keeps your own phone gear powered, but an internet phone still needs the internet. In a wide, long outage, your provider's equipment can lose power too, and then the internet phone won't have a connection to carry the call. That's exactly why a charged cell phone belongs in every plan.

! Never rely on a single path

If the internet itself goes down, the home phone goes with it. A charged cell — and knowing the nearest place with a working phone — rounds out the plan.

Keeping the phone through a long outage

For the long haul, plan to keep the little UPS topped up.

Because phone gear is so thrifty, a UPS holds it a good while — but a very long outage will outlast any battery. A portable power station or a generator can recharge the UPS, or power the phone gear directly, keeping your line alive for hours or days. It's the same hand-off we use throughout: the UPS covers the first stretch, the bigger backup carries the rest.

✓ See our power-station guide

Our 'UPS vs power station' guide shows how to bridge from one to the other — worth a read if your outages run long and the phone is a lifeline.

Common mistakes

The slip-ups that leave folks without a phone.

- **Powering the phone base but not the modem and router** — no internet, no call.
- **Relying on a cordless handset** whose base dies in the outage.
- **No cell backup**, so a provider outage leaves no way to call.
- **Never checking the 911 address** on the internet-phone account.

! Power the whole chain and keep a backup

Nearly every phone-in-an-outage failure comes from a missing link in the chain or having no second way to call. Cover both and you're set.

Common Questions

The outage-phone questions I hear most.

Q: Why does my home phone die when the power goes out?

Because it almost certainly runs through the internet now, not an old copper line. The modem and router it depends on lose power, so the phone loses its connection. A UPS on that gear keeps it alive.

Q: What do I put on the UPS to keep my phone working?

The modem, the router, and the phone adapter or base — plus a fiber box if you have one. If your handset is cordless, put its base on the UPS too.

Q: Will my cordless phone work if the internet gear is on a UPS?

Only if the cordless base also has power — it plugs into the wall and will die in an outage otherwise. Power the base, or keep a corded handset as backup.

Q: Should I still keep a cell phone handy?

Yes, always. A charged cell is your second way to call out if the internet itself goes down. Keep a power bank or car charger to refill it in a long outage.

Q: Does 911 work on an internet phone in an outage?

It works as long as the phone has power and an internet connection, and it routes by the address on file — so keep that address correct. A charged cell is a dependable backup for emergencies.

★ Want help making your phone outage-proof?

It's one of the most worthwhile setups I do. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we'll make sure you can always call out.

The outage-phone checklist

Everything from this guide, in one list.

- ☐ Modem, router, and phone box on the UPS battery outlets.
- ☐ Cordless base on the UPS too — or a corded handset ready.
- ☐ A charged cell phone and a way to recharge it.
- ☐ Your correct 911 address on file with the provider.
- ☐ A tested plan you've tried on a calm day.
- ☐ A recharge plan (power station or generator) for long outages.

✓ Keep the list by the phone

Tape this where the family phone lives. In an outage, a glance tells everyone how to stay reachable.

A note for family and caregivers

If you're setting this up for a parent or loved one, a few extra touches help.

Make the outage phone plan simple and visible: a corded handset they know how to use, a charged cell with big, clear buttons or favorites set, and a short list of key numbers taped nearby. Walk through it together on a calm day so it feels familiar, not frightening, if the power ever goes out at night.

★ I'm glad to help set this up for a loved one

Adult kids often ask me to make sure a parent can always reach help. It's some of the most meaningful work I do — call (330) 200-8042 and we'll get it right, together.

Where to go next

You've got the phone covered — here's what pairs with this guide.

- Start with the source: 'keep your internet up in an outage.'
- A loved one on medical alert? See 'UPS for a medical monitor or alert base.'
- Whole-home Wi-Fi? See 'keeping a Wi-Fi mesh alive.'
- Long outages? See 'extending runtime' and 'UPS vs power station.'

Follow whatever question is on your mind. Each guide stands on its own.

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 keeping your home phone working during an outage 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.

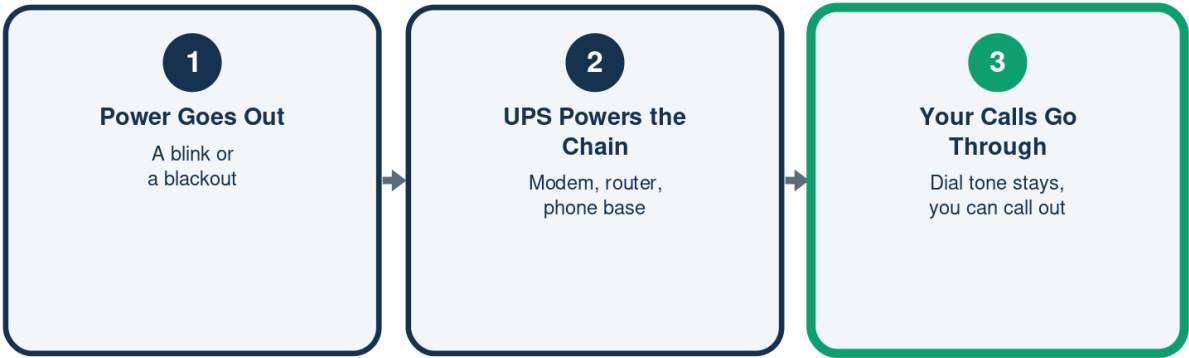
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. Setting up a plug-in UPS is friendly, everyday work I'm glad to do with you; I don't do licensed electrical work myself, so for a hardwired unit or any panel or wiring work 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

Keeping Your Phone Working

Power the chain, keep the dial tone



Keep a charged cell phone as a second way to call, just in case.

Old Landline vs Today's Phone

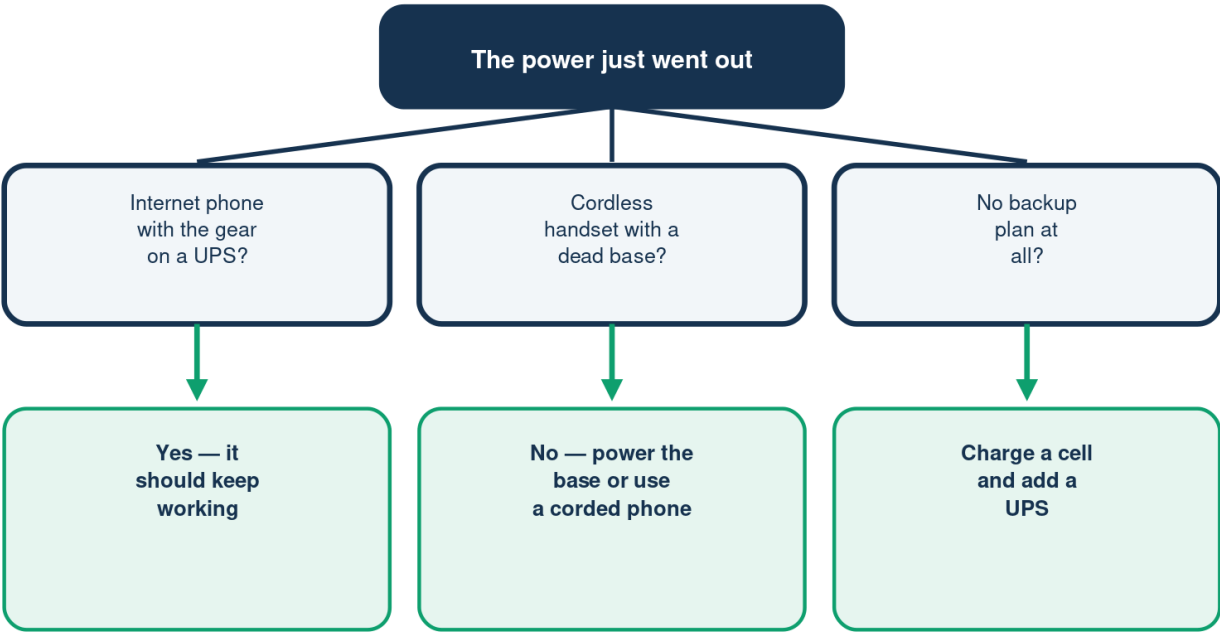
Why the phone changed

	Old copper line	Internet phone
Powered by	Phone company	Your wall power
Works in outage	Usually	Only on a UPS
Needs internet	No	Yes
Backup plan	Rarely needed	UPS + cell

Today's phone gave up the old line's built-in power — a UPS restores it.

Will Your Phone Work in an Outage?

A starting point, not the final word

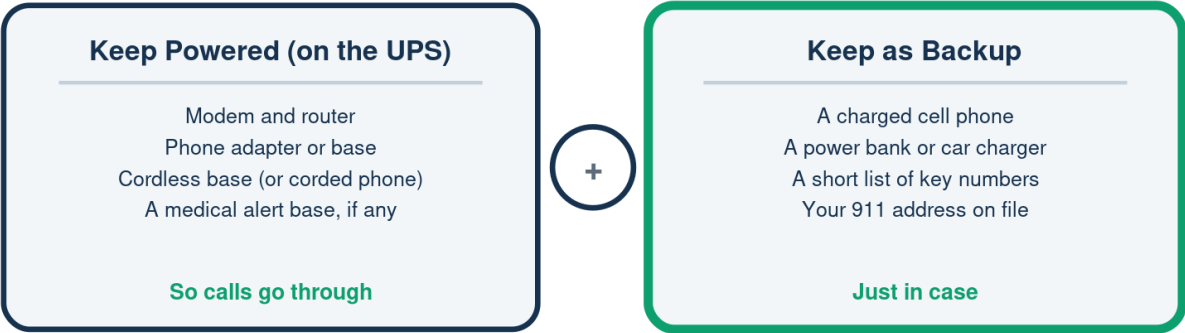


A wide outage can cut the internet itself — keep a charged cell.

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

Your Outage Phone Plan

Two ways to call beats one



If one path is down, you still have the other.

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



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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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