BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

An Extended Guide · No. 1805

A UPS for a Security System, Cameras & NVR

Keep watching and recording
when the power goes out

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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. A power outage is exactly when you'd want your cameras still watching — so a UPS on the recorder and network gear keeps them recording right through it.

A UPS for your cameras and recorder

A home security system is only as good as its power. When the lights go out — or someone cuts them — that's the very moment you'd most want the cameras rolling. A UPS keeps the recorder and cameras watching when it matters most.

I'm Bill, from Bill's Home Tech in Portage County, Ohio. Folks put a lot of care into choosing cameras and then forget that a simple power blink can blind the whole system. A modest UPS closes that gap.

We'll keep it plain: the pieces of a camera system, which ones a UPS needs to power, how wired and battery cameras differ, and how to keep watching — and viewing from your phone — through an outage.

★ Cameras that don't blink when the power does

Keeping your security watching through an outage is a satisfying setup, and rarely expensive. If you'd like a hand, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole idea, on one page

If you read nothing else, here's how to keep security watching.

- ❑ An outage is exactly when you want cameras recording — so protect them.
- ❑ Put the recorder (NVR or DVR), its network switch, and the modem/router on a UPS.
- ❑ Wired cameras that draw power through the network (PoE) stay on when the switch does.
- ❑ Battery or plug-in wireless cameras run on their own power; back up their base or adapter.
- ❑ Keeping the internet on a UPS lets you still view from your phone.
- ❑ An alarm panel usually has its own small battery, but its internet connection may not.

> **✔ Protect the recorder first**
> The recorder is the heart of the system. Keep it powered and most wired cameras keep recording along with it.

Why keep the cameras on in an outage

Because an outage is the moment a camera earns its keep.

Storms, and the rare bad actor, are exactly when the power might go — and exactly when you'd want to see what's happening outside. If your cameras and recorder simply switch off with the lights, you lose the footage for the very stretch you cared about most. A UPS keeps them watching and recording straight through the gap.

> **! The gap you don't want**
> A camera system that goes dark in every outage has a blind spot at the worst possible time. A UPS removes that blind spot.

The pieces of a camera system

Knowing the parts tells you what needs power.

A typical wired system has cameras, a recorder (called an NVR or a DVR) that saves the footage, often a network switch the cameras plug into, and your modem and router for viewing from afar. The recorder and switch are the heart — keep them powered and the wired cameras keep feeding them. Wireless and battery cameras are a little different, which we'll get to.

> **✔ Find the recorder**
> The recorder is usually a small box near your internet gear or tucked in a closet, with the cameras' cables running to it. That's the box a UPS most needs to protect.

Cameras powered through the network (PoE)

Many wired cameras get their power the clever way — down the same cable that carries their video.

A lot of modern wired cameras use something called PoE, which means they draw their power right through the network cable from the recorder or a network switch — no separate plug at each camera. The happy result for backup: if you put that recorder or switch on a UPS, the cameras feeding from it stay powered too, all at once.

> **★ One UPS, all the wired cameras**
> This is why protecting a wired camera system is so tidy — powering the recorder and switch keeps every PoE camera alive together. A single modest UPS often does it.

What to put on the UPS

The heart of the system, and the path to your phone.

- **The recorder** (NVR or DVR) — so footage keeps saving.
- **The network switch** the cameras connect through — so PoE cameras stay powered.
- **The modem and router** — so you can still view from your phone and get alerts.
- **A wireless camera's base or adapter**, if you have one.

All on the battery outlets. Because these are small electronics, a modest UPS keeps a camera system watching for a good while.

Wired vs wireless and battery cameras

How your cameras get power decides your backup plan.

Camera type	In an outage
Wired PoE	Stays on if the recorder/switch is on a UPS
Wireless (plug-in)	Put its power adapter or base on a UPS
Battery-powered	Runs on its own battery; keep it charged
Doorbell camera	Keep its power (and chime) on a UPS if wired

Battery cameras are the easy case — they already ride out an outage on their own charge. Wired systems are where a UPS does its best work.

Keeping remote viewing alive

Recording is half the value; seeing it live from your phone is the other half.

Being able to check your cameras from your phone during an outage — while you're away, or from another room — depends on your internet staying up. That's why the modem and router belong on the UPS alongside the recorder. Protect that chain and you keep both the recording and the live view when it counts.

> **✔ See it live when you're not home**
> If you travel or spend time away, keeping the internet on a UPS means an outage doesn't cut you off from your own cameras.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Security cameras help everywhere, but rural properties are bigger, with longer outages and more to watch.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, a few cameras and a recorder cover the doors and yard, and short outages are the main threat.

- One modest UPS on the recorder, switch, and internet keeps a small system watching.
- Remote viewing stays alive so you can check in from your phone.
- Battery doorbell and yard cameras ride out the blink on their own.
- Short outages mean you rarely need more than a modest unit.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a private well, properties are larger, systems have more cameras, and outages run long — so the plan grows.

- Size the UPS for a recorder plus several PoE cameras drawing power through it.
- Consider bridging to a generator or power station so cameras watch through a long outage.
- Keep the internet on the UPS so you can view a distant barn or gate from the house or your phone.
- Battery cameras on outbuildings are handy where running power is a chore.

> **★ Want your cameras watching through outages?**
> I'll size a UPS for your recorder and cameras and keep your remote viewing alive. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

A word about alarm panels

Burglar and fire alarm panels are a special case worth understanding.

Most alarm panels already carry their own small backup battery, so the alarm itself keeps working briefly in an outage. But if the panel reports to a monitoring service over your internet, that path can go dark when the modem and router lose power. Keeping the internet gear on a UPS helps the panel stay in touch. Don't open or rewire an alarm panel yourself — that's the alarm company's job.

> **★ Leave the panel to the pros**
> I can make sure the internet behind your alarm stays powered, but the panel itself is the alarm company's territory. I'll help you coordinate with them if needed.

The recorder is the heart

If you protect one thing, protect this.

The recorder is what actually saves your footage. If it loses power mid-recording, you not only stop recording — you can, in a bad case, risk the footage it was writing, much like any always-on box. Keeping the recorder on a UPS both continues the recording and lets it shut down cleanly if the outage outlasts the battery.

> **! No recorder, no footage**
> Cameras with no recorder to feed are just watching an empty room. The recorder is the piece that turns 'watching' into 'a record you can review.'

Sizing a UPS for a camera system

More cameras drawing power through the recorder means more load.

A recorder alone is thrifty, but if several PoE cameras draw their power through it or through a switch on the same UPS, that adds up. Total the load of the recorder, the switch, and the internet gear, and size with headroom. If you want the cameras to watch through a longer outage, size for more runtime or plan to bridge to a bigger battery.

> **✔ Count the cameras' draw**
> Remember that PoE cameras get their power from the recorder or switch, so they count toward the load on that UPS. Our sizing guide helps you add it up.

Doorbell cameras and the chime

A popular gadget with its own outage quirks.

A battery doorbell camera rides out an outage on its own charge, but it still needs your internet to send you alerts and let you see the live view — so the modem and router on a UPS keep it useful. A wired doorbell and its indoor chime run on your home's power; keeping the chime's little power supply and the internet on a UPS keeps the whole thing answering.

> **✔ The doorbell needs the internet too**
> Even a battery doorbell goes quiet on your phone if the internet drops. Keeping the internet gear on a UPS is what keeps the alerts coming.

Setting it up, step by step

A UPS and a few plugs, no rewiring of cameras.

- ❑ Let the UPS charge fully first.
- ❑ Plug the recorder (NVR/DVR) into a battery outlet.
- ❑ Plug the network switch the cameras use into a battery outlet.
- ❑ Add the modem and router so remote viewing stays alive.
- ❑ Leave battery cameras as they are — they run on their own charge.
- ❑ Test with a brief unplug and confirm the cameras keep recording.

That's the whole job on the power side. I don't rewire cameras or alarm panels — that's the installer's work — but I'm glad to set up the backup power and test it.

A clean shutdown for the recorder

Like a NAS, a recorder is happier ending an outage gracefully.

Some recorders can connect to a UPS and shut themselves down safely when the battery runs low, protecting the footage they've saved. If yours supports it, set that up — it's the same idea as a NAS. If it doesn't, the UPS at least keeps it recording through the outage and gives it the gentlest possible stop when the battery is spent.

> **✔ Protect the saved footage**
> A clean shutdown keeps the recordings you've already captured safe. Our safe-shutdown guide covers the idea, and I can check whether your recorder supports it.

Placing the recorder and UPS

Both run around the clock, so give them a good home.

A recorder and its UPS run 24/7, so keep them somewhere cool, dry, and breathable — not sealed in a hot closet or buried under clutter. Heat is hard on the recorder's drive and the UPS's battery alike. Leave the UPS where you can see its lights and hear its beeps. Our placement guide has the full rundown.

> **✔ Cool closet, cracked door**
> If the recorder lives in a closet, leave the door cracked or add a vent so heat can escape. Both the recorder and the UPS will thank you.

Common mistakes

The slip-ups that blind a system at the wrong moment.

- **Protecting cameras but not the recorder** — no recorder, no saved footage.
- **Forgetting the internet**, so you can't view or get alerts in an outage.
- **Overlooking that PoE cameras draw from the switch**, so the UPS is undersized.
- **Trying to rewire the alarm panel** — leave that to the alarm company.

> **! Recorder, switch, and internet — together**
> Nearly every camera-backup gap comes from protecting one piece and missing another. Cover the recorder, the switch, and the internet as a set.

Common Questions

The camera questions I hear most.

Q: Will my cameras keep recording in an outage?

If they're wired and the recorder and switch are on a UPS, yes — including PoE cameras that draw power through the switch. Battery cameras run on their own charge regardless.

Q: What do I actually put on the UPS?

The recorder (NVR or DVR), the network switch the cameras use, and your modem and router so you can still view from your phone.

Q: Do my PoE cameras need their own UPS?

No — they draw power through the recorder or switch, so powering that box keeps the cameras alive too. Just remember they add to its load when you size the UPS.

Q: Can I still watch on my phone during an outage?

Yes, as long as the internet stays up — which is why the modem and router go on the UPS with the recorder.

Q: What about my alarm panel?

It usually has its own small backup battery, but its internet connection may not — so keeping the internet gear on a UPS helps. Leave the panel itself to the alarm company.

> **★ Want your security watching through outages?**
> I'll set up the backup power for your recorder, switch, and internet, and test it. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

The security checklist

Everything from this guide, in one list.

- ❑ Recorder (NVR/DVR) on the battery outlets.
- ❑ The cameras' network switch on the battery outlets.
- ❑ Modem and router on the battery, for remote viewing.
- ❑ Size for the recorder plus any PoE cameras it powers.
- ❑ Set the recorder to shut down cleanly if it can.
- ❑ A cool, breathable spot for the recorder and UPS.

> **✔ Watch, record, and view**
> Keep the cameras watching, the recorder saving, and the internet carrying it to your phone — that's a system that stays useful in an outage.

Deterrence and peace of mind

A camera that keeps working is a camera that keeps reassuring you.

Part of a camera's value is simply that it's always watching — for your peace of mind and as a quiet deterrent. A system that blinks off with every outage undercuts both. Keeping it powered through the bumps means it's genuinely always on the job, which is the whole reason you installed it.

> **★ Always-on, for real**
> For not much money, a UPS turns 'usually watching' into 'always watching.' That's a comfort worth having — happy to set it up at (330) 200-8042.

Where to go next

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

- Keep the internet behind it up: 'keep your internet up.'
- A recorder is like a NAS: see 'a UPS for a NAS or home server.'
- Right-size it: our 'sizing' guide.
- 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.

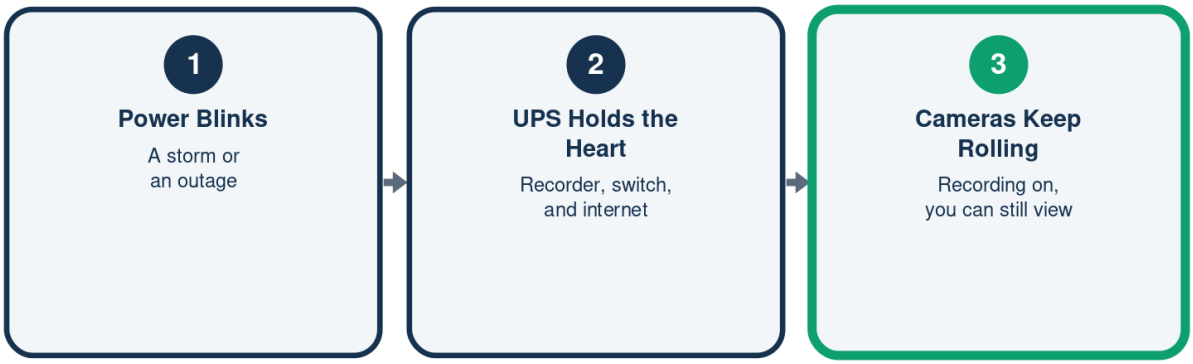
I hope this guide made keeping your security cameras and recorder powered feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

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 the Cameras Recording

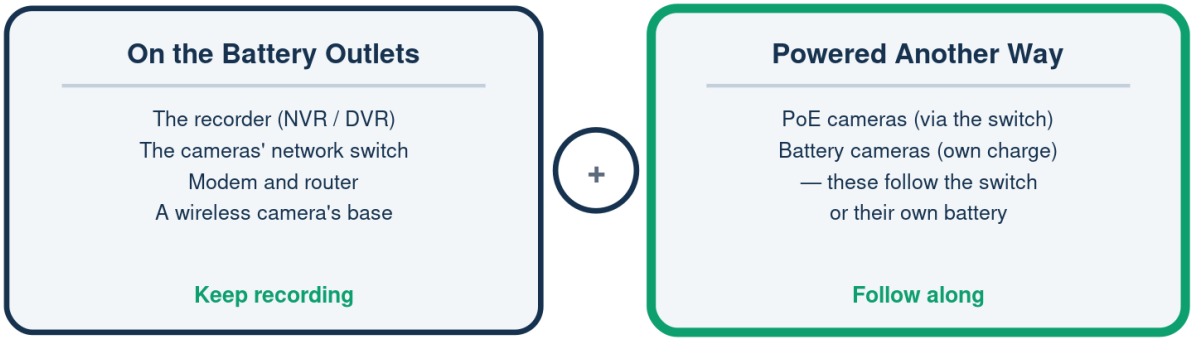
Watching, even when the power isn't



Wired PoE cameras draw power through the switch — so they stay on.

Camera-System UPS: What Goes Where

Power the heart, and the cameras follow

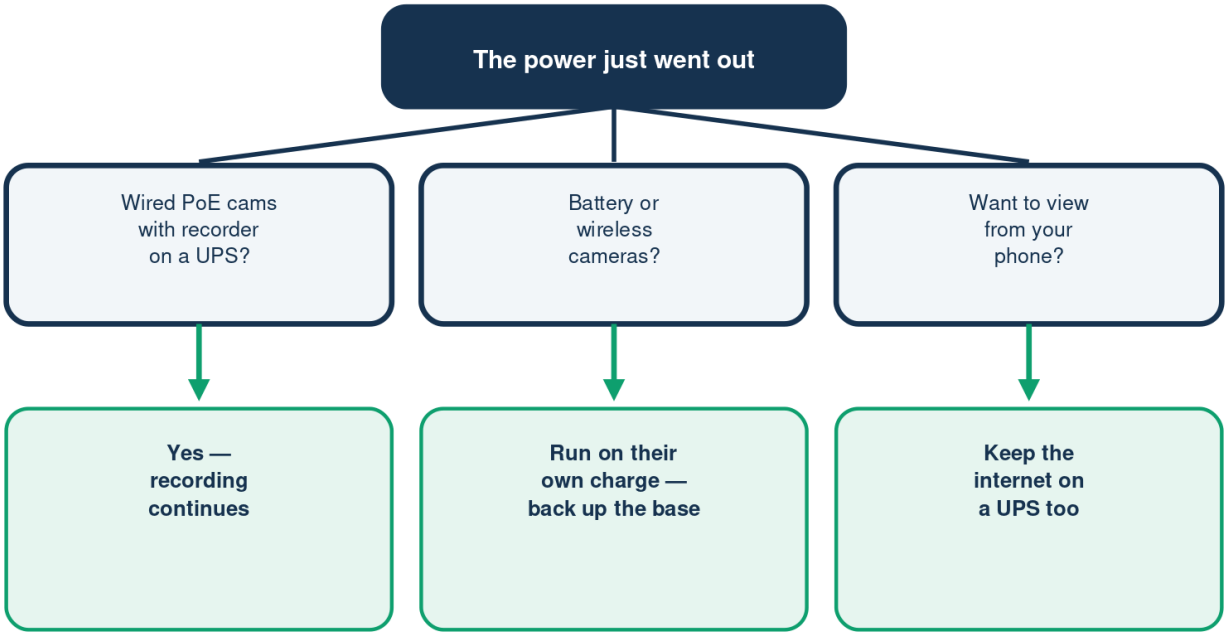


Power the recorder and switch; the wired cameras follow.

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

Will Your Cameras Stay On?

A starting point, not the final word



The alarm panel has its own battery; keep its internet powered.

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

Camera Types in an Outage

What to know for each

	What to know
Wired PoE	Power the recorder/switch
Wireless (plug-in)	Put its adapter on a UPS
Battery cameras	Run on own battery
Doorbell camera	Keep its power & internet

Wired systems are where a UPS does its best work.

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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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