



An Extended Guide · No. 1701

A Standby Generator for a Well-Water Home

The hands-off way to
keep your water on

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! Read this first — on a well, no power means no water

On a home with a private well, a power outage isn't just dark — it's dry. The pump that lifts your water runs on your home's electricity, so when the power stops, every tap, toilet, and hose stops with it. Keep a few days of stored drinking water on hand as a backup you can count on — a common guideline is about a gallon per person per day. And know this from the start: a well pump is almost always a 240-volt appliance wired straight into your electrical panel, so any backup hookup for it is a licensed electrician's job. Never try to feed it with a cord or by backfeeding an outlet — that is unsafe, against code, and can put deadly voltage on the power lines outside. A standby generator is the hands-off option: sized right, it starts on its own and brings your water back within seconds — no hauling anything out in a storm. It is a bigger investment, installed by pros, and for many well homes it is worth every penny.

A standby generator for a well-water home

If you want your water to come back on its own — no going outside, no starting anything — a standby generator is the option to understand. Here is the whole picture, in plain English.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. A standby generator is the permanently installed kind — it sits outside on a little pad, like an air conditioner unit, wired into your home. When the power fails, it starts itself within seconds and takes over. When the power comes back, it shuts itself off. You do not have to be home, or even awake.

For a well-water family, that automatic quality is the big draw: your water simply keeps flowing, storm or no storm. It costs more than a portable and it is a professional installation, so let's walk through what you get and what it takes.

★ Wondering if it is right for your home?

A standby is a real investment, so it is worth thinking through calmly. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we will weigh it against your needs — no sales pitch, since I do not sell them.

The whole picture, in about a minute

If you remember only these things, you understand the heart of the standby option.

- ❑ It is permanently installed outdoors and starts itself within seconds of an outage — fully automatic.
- ❑ It runs on natural gas or propane, so there is no gasoline to store or pour in the dark.
- ❑ Sized right by a pro, it runs your well pump — surge and all — along with the rest of your home.
- ❑ It is wired in through an automatic transfer switch by a licensed electrician, with a permit and inspection.
- ❑ It costs more upfront than a portable and needs occasional maintenance — but it is truly hands-off.
- ❑ Sizing and fuel supply must be planned by pros — never guessed.

✓ The one-line summary

A standby generator turns a well-water outage into a non-event — the lights flicker, the generator starts, and your water never really stops. That convenience is what you are paying for.

How a standby generator works

It is a simple idea, carried out automatically. Here is the whole sequence.

A standby generator watches your power around the clock through its automatic transfer switch. The instant the utility power drops, the switch signals the generator, which starts its engine and takes over your circuits — usually within seconds. Your well pump, fridge, furnace, and lights come back before you have found a flashlight.

When the utility power returns and stays steady, the switch hands your home back to the grid and tells the generator to shut down and cool off. It all happens on its own. Most units also run a brief self-test each week, so you know it is ready without lifting a finger.

✓ Automatic is the whole point

The magic is that you do nothing. For anyone who does not want to wrestle a portable generator out into the rain — and that is most of us — this is a real comfort.

Why it suits a well-water home so well

Every backup option has a best fit. Here is why a standby is often a natural match out in the country.

- **Automatic water** — your pump restarts on its own, so you are never without water waiting to start a machine.
- **Handles the surge** — sized right, it starts a 240-volt pump cleanly, every time.
- **No fuel runs** — it draws from your propane tank or gas line, so there is no gasoline to fetch in a storm.
- **Good for long outages** — exactly the kind rural lines tend to have, since crews reach the country last.
- **Works when you are away** — it protects your pipes, your food, and your animals even if no one is home.

That last point matters more than folks expect. If you travel, or you are away for a day, a standby keeps the heat on and the water flowing so you do not come home to frozen pipes or a flooded basement from a failed sump. Our guides on winter concerns and the septic pump cover those risks.

✓ Peace of mind, even when away

For a home with animals to water, or a family member who cannot go without water, the automatic, unattended quality of a standby is worth a great deal.

Natural gas or propane — the fuel question

A standby runs on gas, not gasoline. Which gas depends on what your property has.

In town, many homes have a natural gas line, which supplies the generator continuously — as long as the gas keeps flowing, the generator can run for days. Out in the country, natural gas lines are less common, so most rural standby units run on propane from a tank on the property.

Propane stores for years without going stale, which is a real plus. The one thing to plan is tank size: a bigger tank, or keeping it topped up, means the generator can carry you through a long outage. Your installer and propane supplier will size the tank to your generator and how long you want to be covered.

✓ Plan the fuel for a long outage

Since rural outages can run for days, talk with your installer about a propane tank large enough to match. Running out of fuel halfway through defeats the purpose.

Whole-home, or just the essentials?

You do not have to power everything. There is an honest choice here that affects the size and the cost.

A larger standby can run your entire home — every circuit, all at once, air conditioning and all. A smaller, more affordable one can run just your essential circuits: the well pump, the furnace, the fridge and freezer, and some lights. For many well-water families, essentials-only covers everything that truly matters in an outage.

Whichever you choose, the well pump belongs on the essentials list — water first. Your electrician and installer will help you decide which circuits to include and size the generator to match. Our sizing guide explains the thinking, and the pros confirm the numbers.

✓ Essentials-only can be plenty

Covering the pump, heat, food, and a few lights often meets every real need at a friendlier price than a whole-home unit. Water first, then build the list from there.

What the installation involves

This is professional work from start to finish, and that is a good thing. Here is what to expect.

A standby install typically means a level pad or base outside, a gas or propane hookup by a qualified gas fitter, and the electrical work — the automatic transfer switch and panel connection — by a licensed electrician. It usually needs a permit and a final inspection, which is exactly what you want on work like this.

Placement matters: the unit sits outdoors with clearances around it, and its exhaust is directed safely away from windows, doors, and vents, just as with any engine. Because it is professionally sited and vented, it does not carry the same carbon-monoxide placement worries as a portable you set out yourself — but the same principle of keeping exhaust away from the house still guides where it goes.

! This is licensed-pro work, always

Gas lines and 240-volt panel wiring are not do-it-yourself jobs. A licensed electrician and a qualified gas professional keep it safe, code-compliant, and properly permitted. That is money well spent.

Keeping a standby ready for years

A standby asks little of you, but it is still an engine, so it does want a bit of care.

Like any engine, a standby needs occasional oil changes and a checkup now and then — often once a year, plus after any long run. Many owners set up a simple maintenance plan with their installer so they never have to think about it. The weekly self-test the unit runs on its own also tells you it is healthy.

Beyond that, keep the area around it clear of leaves, snow, and nesting critters, and make sure your propane tank stays topped up. A quick look now and then is really all the attention it needs between professional visits.

✓ A maintenance plan makes it truly hands-off

If you would rather never think about oil changes, a yearly service plan with your installer keeps the whole thing worry-free. For many folks that is the point of going standby in the first place.

Standby vs. portable — an honest comparison

Neither is 'better.' They fit different budgets and different temperaments. Here is the straight comparison.

	Standby	Portable
Starts	By itself	You start it
You must be home?	No	Yes
Fuel	Gas or propane	Gasoline or propane
Upfront cost	Higher	Lower
Runs the pump?	Yes, if sized	Yes, if sized

A portable costs less and is a fine choice if you do not mind going out to start it and refuel it. A standby costs more but asks nothing of you and works when you are away. Both, sized correctly, will run your well pump. Our portable-generator guide covers that side in full.

★ **Not sure which suits you?**

It often comes down to budget and whether you want it automatic. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we will talk through your situation honestly.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

A standby generator serves any home well, but the reason it earns its keep is different depending on your water.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs on city water, a standby is about comfort and convenience — keeping the heat, the fridge, the internet, and maybe the air conditioning going automatically, with no water worry, since city water keeps flowing anyway.

- No pump to restart, so sizing is about comfort loads, not a 240-volt surge.
- Natural gas is often available in town, giving continuous fuel.
- The draw is convenience — power that never seems to blink.
- A smaller essentials unit often covers everything that matters in town.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a well, a standby does something bigger: it keeps your water on, automatically, through the long outages rural lines are prone to. That is why so many well-water families consider one.

- Your pump restarts on its own — water never really stops, even in a long outage.
- Propane is the usual rural fuel; plan a tank big enough for a multi-day outage.
- It protects pipes, animals, and a septic pump even when no one is home.
- Put the well pump at the top of the essentials list — water first.

★ Well or city — I will help you weigh it

The value of a standby looks different on a well than in town. Call me at (330) 200-8042 and we will figure out whether it fits your home and budget.

Sizing it right — leave this to the pros

Sizing a standby is a professional job, and here is why that is the right call.

A standby has to start your well pump — surge and all — while also carrying whatever else you want running. Get it too small and it struggles or refuses the pump; too large and you overpay and burn extra fuel. The sweet spot depends on your pump, your circuits, and your home.

Your installer and electrician will do a proper load calculation, factoring in the pump's startup, and match a unit to it. That is not something to eyeball from a brochure. Our sizing guide explains what goes into it, so you can follow the conversation and ask good questions.

! No guessing on the surge

The pump's startup surge is the make-or-break number for a standby, just as for a portable. A proper load calculation includes it — a brochure guess does not.

The automatic transfer switch — the safe heart of it

This is the piece that makes a standby both automatic and safe. It is worth understanding.

The automatic transfer switch is the brain between your home, the grid, and the generator. It senses the outage, starts the generator, and — crucially — keeps your home safely disconnected from the utility lines while the generator runs. That protection is not optional; it is what keeps line workers safe and your generator from being harmed when power returns.

Because it is doing serious, code-regulated work, the transfer switch is installed by a licensed electrician, permitted, and inspected. Our guide on connecting backup power explains transfer switches in general, including the manual kind used with portables.

! Never bypass the transfer switch

The transfer switch is what makes any generator hookup safe. It is never something to work around or do without. On a standby it is automatic; on a portable it is manual — but always present, always installed by a pro.

A simple path to a standby that fits

Take these in order and you will get a system that fits your home and your budget, without surprises.

- ❑ Decide what you want covered — whole home, or the essentials with the pump first.
- ❑ Get your well pump's numbers so the surge can be sized in.
- ❑ Have an installer and electrician do a proper load calculation and quote.
- ❑ Sort out the fuel — natural gas if available, or a right-sized propane tank.
- ❑ Confirm the permit and inspection are part of the job.
- ❑ Set up a simple maintenance plan so it stays hands-off.

★ I will help you be a smart buyer

From deciding what to cover to reading the quotes, I am glad to sit on your side of the table. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we will make sure you get the right size for the right reasons.

Even with a standby, still keep stored water

A standby is wonderful, but no machine is perfect. A little stored water is your safety net under the safety net.

A standby could be down for maintenance, run low on fuel, or hit a rare fault right when you need it. The odds are low, but a few days of stored water costs almost nothing and covers that gap completely. It is the cheapest insurance in this whole category.

Think of it this way: the standby handles the long, automatic outages, and stored water handles the rare morning the standby itself needs attention. Together they mean you are never truly without water. Our storing-water guide shows how much to keep and how to keep it fresh.

✓ Belt and suspenders

Even the best automatic system deserves a simple backup underneath it. A few jugs of water set aside is that backup, and it asks nothing of you.

A few common myths, gently corrected

These come up when folks weigh a standby. Here is the honest version of each.

The myth	The honest truth
A standby needs no maintenance.	It is an engine — it needs occasional oil and a yearly checkup.
It can be installed as a weekend project.	Gas and 240-volt work is licensed-pro work, permitted and inspected.
Propane goes stale like gasoline.	Propane stores for years — one of its big advantages.
Once I have one, I can skip stored water.	Keep a little anyway — for the rare day the unit itself needs service.

! Automatic is not the same as maintenance-free

A standby runs itself, but it still wants a little care. A simple service plan is the easiest way to keep it truly worry-free.

What I can do — and what I bring in a pro for

I want to be plain about my role, because honesty is the whole point of these guides.

- **What I do:** help you decide whether a standby fits, choose what to cover, read the quotes with you, and line up trustworthy installers — all at your pace, no pressure.
- **A licensed electrician does** the automatic transfer switch and panel wiring — permitted and inspected.
- **A qualified installer and gas professional** handle the pad, the gas or propane hookup, and the sizing.

I am a patient tech helper with 30-plus years of experience, not a licensed electrician, gas fitter, or generator dealer — and I earn nothing on what you buy. What I am is the person who helps you make sense of it all and coordinates the pros who do the licensed work.

★ One friendly guide through a big decision

A standby is a large purchase, and it helps to have someone in your corner. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and I will help you get it right.

The mistakes that catch people out

Most standby regret comes from a handful of avoidable slip-ups.

- **Undersizing** so the unit cannot cleanly start the well pump.
- **Too small a propane tank**, so the generator runs dry midway through a long outage.
- **Skipping maintenance** until the unit will not start on the day it is needed.
- **Forgetting the permit and inspection**, which protect you and your home.
- **Dropping stored water** entirely, leaving no fallback if the unit is ever down.

Our common-mistakes guide covers each in detail. Every one is easy to avoid with a good installer and a little planning up front.

✓ The fix is a good pro and a plan

A proper load calculation, a right-sized tank, and a service plan quietly remove most of this list. Water first, then the details.

Questions worth asking an installer

A few good questions help you compare quotes and choose well.

Q: Will this unit start my well pump, surge and all?

Ask them to show you the load calculation that includes the pump's startup. That is the make-or-break number.

Q: What will you cover — whole home or essentials?

Be clear about your list, with the well pump at the top. It affects both the size and the price.

Q: How big a propane tank will I need for a long outage?

For rural homes, size the tank to a multi-day outage, not just a few hours.

Q: Are the permit, inspection, and a maintenance plan included?

You want all three. They keep the install safe and the unit reliable for years.

✓ Get more than one quote

Two or three quotes let you compare not just price but how carefully each installer sized the system. Careful sizing is worth more than a low number.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about standby generators on well homes.

Q: Will a standby run my well pump automatically?

Yes — sized right, it starts within seconds of an outage and runs your pump, surge and all, with no action from you. That automatic water is its main appeal for well homes.

Q: What fuel does it use?

Natural gas where available — common in town — or propane from a tank, which is usual out in the country. Both avoid storing gasoline.

Q: Do I have to be home for it to work?

No. It runs unattended, which is why it protects pipes, food, and animals even when you are away.

Q: Is it a big project to install?

It is a professional install — pad, gas hookup, and an automatic transfer switch by a licensed electrician, with a permit and inspection. That is exactly what you want on this kind of work.

★ Still weighing it up?

There is no silly question. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we will talk through whether a standby fits your home — with no obligation.

A gentle word about cost

A standby is the priciest option in this category, so let me be straight about the value.

Between the unit, the pad, the gas or propane work, the electrical hookup, and the permit, a standby is a significant investment — more than a portable. What you are buying is automatic, hands-off, unattended power that keeps your water on through long outages, even when you are away. For some families that convenience and peace of mind is easily worth it; for others, a portable makes more sense.

I do not sell generators and earn nothing on your choice, so my only aim is to help you spend where it truly helps. If a standby is not in the budget today, a portable plus stored water is a fine plan you can grow from.

★ Right-sized for your needs, not oversold

The goal is the system that fits your home and budget — not the biggest one. My first visit is a flat \$99 with a 30-day come-back-free guarantee, and I am glad to review quotes with you on your screen for \$49.

Bringing it all together

If this guide did its job, you can see whether a standby is right for your home. Here it is in three lines.

- ❑ **What it gives you:** automatic, unattended water and power through long outages — you do nothing.
- ❑ **What it takes:** a professional install, a sensible fuel plan, and a little yearly care.
- ❑ **The safety net:** keep a few days of stored water underneath it anyway.

If hands-off water matters to you — because you travel, have animals, or simply do not want to wrestle a generator in a storm — a standby is well worth considering. Take the decision at your own pace.

★ And whenever you would like a hand

That is exactly what I do — come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

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 deciding on a standby generator for your well-water home 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.

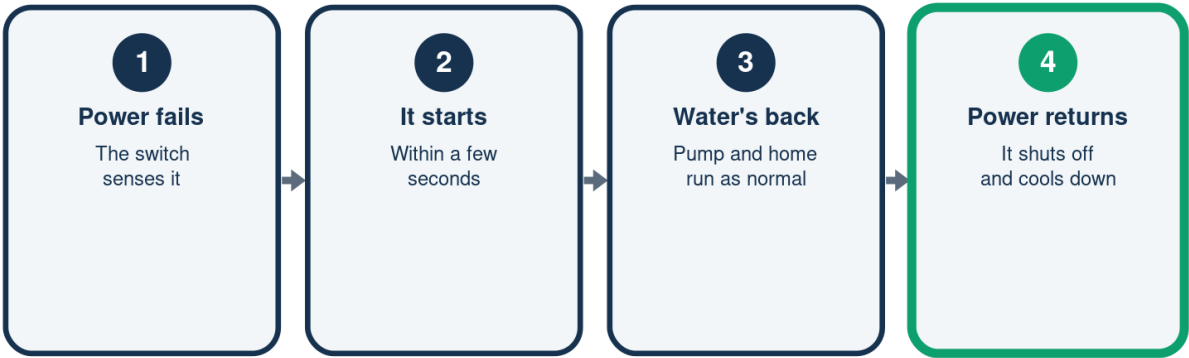
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day,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

How a Standby Generator Works

All of it automatic



You do nothing -- even if you are away or asleep.

Standby vs. Portable Generator

Two good tools, different fits

	Standby	Portable
Starts	By itself	You start it
Home required?	No	Yes
Fuel	Gas / propane	Gasoline / propane
Upfront cost	Higher	Lower

Both run a well pump if sized right by a pro.

What a Standby Install Involves

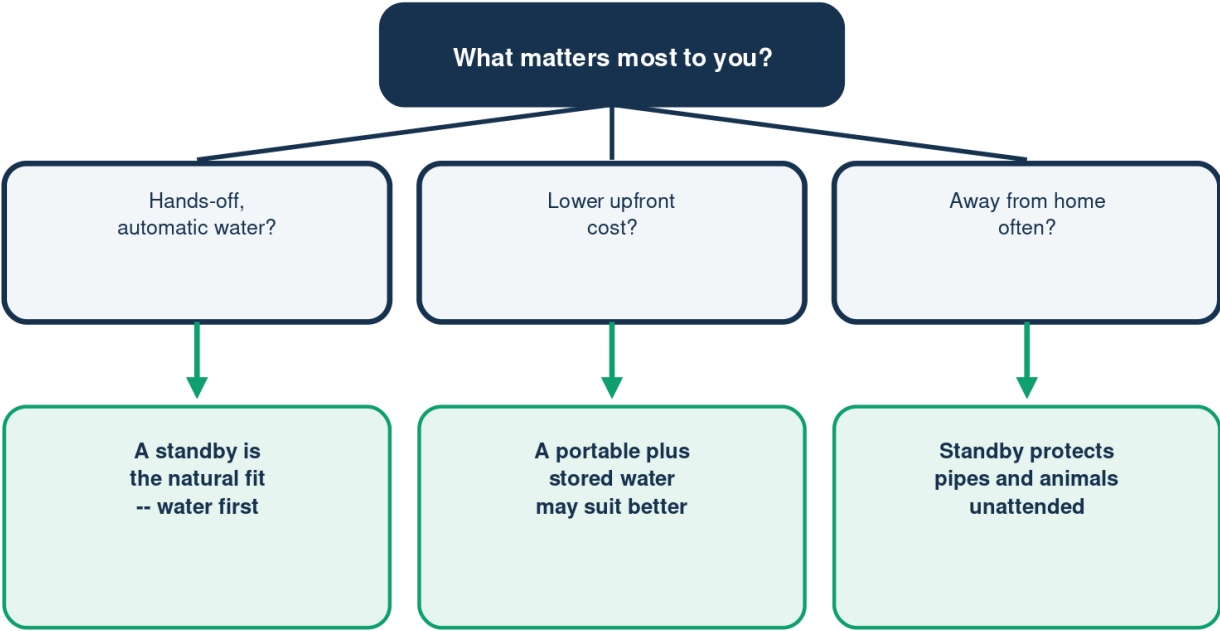
All professional work

	Piece	Who does it
The pad	Level base	Installer
Fuel hookup	Gas or propane	Gas professional
Transfer switch	Auto, at panel	Licensed electrician
Permit + inspect	Required	Part of the job

Gas and 240-volt work is licensed-pro work -- always.

Is a Standby Right for You?

A few honest questions



Keep a few days of stored water even with a standby, just in case.

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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