



An Extended Guide · No. 1705

Storing Water as Your First Backup

The cheapest, simplest
layer of your whole plan

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

Free & printable — share it with someone who needs it



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

! 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. Stored water is the one layer that asks nothing of you during an outage — no fuel, no wiring, no starting anything. It is simply there. That is why, of everything in this whole category, this is the guide I most want you to act on.

Storing water — your first and best backup

If you do just one thing after reading any guide in this category, make it this one. Storing a few days of water is cheap, simple, and helps no matter what else you decide.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I help folks with generators and batteries all the time, and those are wonderful — but they cost money and take planning. Stored water costs almost nothing and you can start today. It is the foundation everything else sits on.

The beauty of stored water is that it is foolproof. A generator can run out of fuel; a battery can run down. A jug of water just waits patiently until you need it. Let's make sure you have enough, kept the right way.

★ The easiest step of all

You do not need me or anyone else for this one — just a few clean containers and a few minutes. But if you would like a hand thinking it through, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole thing, in about a minute

If you remember only these things, you already have the essentials of a water store.

- ❑ A common guideline is about a gallon per person per day, for several days, just for drinking and cooking.
- ❑ Store extra beyond that for flushing, washing, and any animals — it adds up quickly.
- ❑ Use clean, food-grade, sealable containers, kept out of sunlight in a cool spot.
- ❑ Rotate it now and then and write the date on it, so it stays fresh.
- ❑ Your water heater holds many gallons — a hidden reserve you can draw on.
- ❑ When a storm is forecast, fill the bathtub and extra containers before the power goes.

✓ Start with what you have

You do not need special gear to begin. Fill a few clean containers this week, and you have already built the first layer of your whole plan — today, for almost nothing.

How much water should I keep?

The honest answer is 'more than you would guess,' because a home uses water in more ways than we notice.

A widely used emergency-preparedness guideline is about one gallon per person per day, for at least several days, just for drinking and cooking. For a couple planning three days, that is a handful of gallons — very manageable. Planning for a longer rural outage simply means keeping a bit more.

But drinking and cooking are only part of it. Flushing toilets, washing hands and dishes, and caring for pets and livestock all take water too — often far more than drinking does. So think in two buckets: clean drinking water you protect carefully, and general-use water for everything else.

✓ Two kinds of stored water

Keep a smaller amount of carefully stored drinking water, plus a larger amount of general-use water for flushing and washing. The second kind can be your filled bathtub and buckets.

Plan for the longer rural outage

Out in the country, it pays to aim your water store at a longer stretch than folks in town might.

When a storm knocks out power, utility crews generally restore the most homes first, which often means dense in-town neighborhoods come back before scattered rural houses. So an outage that is a few hours in town can be a day or more out here. Your water store should reflect that.

The good news is that stored water is cheap, so planning for a longer outage barely costs more — a few extra containers, filled and set aside. Aim high and a short outage is easy; aim low and a long one catches you out. There is no downside to having a little extra.

! Aim for days, not hours

Size your water store for the long outage rural lines are prone to. If the power comes back quickly, wonderful — you have lost nothing by being ready for more.

What to store it in

The container matters more than folks expect — for safety and for how long the water stays good.

- **Food-grade, sealable containers** — made for water or food, with lids that close tightly.
- **Store-bought sealed bottled water** — an easy, reliable option that keeps well until opened.
- **Larger water jugs or containers** made for drinking-water storage — good for keeping more in less fuss.
- **Clean buckets with lids** — fine for general-use and flushing water, kept separate from drinking water.

Avoid reusing old milk jugs and juice bottles for long-term drinking-water storage — they can break down and are hard to clean fully, so leftover sugars or proteins can spoil the water. If you reuse containers, choose sturdy food-grade ones and wash them well first.

✓ New or food-grade is worth it

For drinking water you may keep for months, a proper food-grade container or sealed store-bought water is worth the small cost. Save the old jugs for non-drinking uses if at all.

Keeping stored water fresh

Water does not spoil the way food does, but a little care keeps it tasting clean and ready.

Store water out of direct sunlight, somewhere cool and steady — a basement, a closet, an interior corner. Sunlight and heat can encourage growth over time, especially in clear containers. Keep lids sealed until you need it, and keep containers up off a bare concrete floor if you can.

Write the date on each container and refresh it periodically — tying it to something you already do, like the clock change, makes it easy to remember. Sealed store-bought water lasts a good while; water you bottle yourself is best refreshed more often. If water ever looks cloudy or smells off, do not drink it — treat it or replace it.

✓ Date it and rotate it

A date written on the container and a twice-a-year refresh keeps your store fresh without any guesswork. Pour the old water on the garden and refill.

Your hidden reserve — the water heater

Many well homes have gallons of water stored already and do not realize it. Here is how to use it.

Your water heater tank holds many gallons of clean water at all times. In an outage, that is a real reserve you can draw on — through the drain valve at the bottom of the tank, into a clean container. It is there whether or not you planned ahead, which makes it a lovely safety net.

A couple of cautions: if the power or fuel to the heater is off, the water will be whatever temperature the tank holds, so let hot water cool before using it. And it is wise to know where your tank's drain valve and shutoff are before you need them. Our guide on the pressure tank explains the rest of your system.

✓ Know your drain valve now

Take one minute to find the drain valve at the base of your water heater today. Knowing where it is means you can tap that reserve calmly during an outage.

Filling up when a storm is coming

Much of the time, an outage gives you warning. That warning is a free chance to top up.

- ❑ Fill your drinking-water containers to the brim while the power is still on.
- ❑ Fill the bathtub — a clean tub or a tub liner holds a big reserve for flushing and washing.
- ❑ Fill a few buckets and set them by the bathrooms for flushing.
- ❑ Top off water for pets and any livestock.
- ❑ If you have a generator, this is also the time to check fuel — see our game-plan guide.

None of this takes long, and it means that if the power does go, you start the outage with water already secured. A filled bathtub alone can handle days of flushing. Twenty minutes of filling is the cheapest insurance there is.

✓ The bathtub is your big reserve

A filled tub is not for bathing — it is a large flushing-and-washing reserve. A bucketful poured into the toilet bowl flushes it, and the tub holds many flushes.

If you are ever unsure the water is safe

Most stored water is perfectly fine. But it is worth knowing how to make water safe, just in case.

If stored water has been sitting a long time, or you are drawing from a source you are not certain about, you can make it safer by bringing it to a rolling boil for a minute and letting it cool. Boiling is the simplest, most reliable way to kill germs in clear water. Cloudy water should be filtered through a clean cloth first.

There are also water-purification tablets and drops made for this, kept with emergency supplies. And after an outage, if your well may have been affected — say by flooding — your county health department can advise on testing before you trust the well water again. Our winter and outage-recovery notes touch on this too.

! When in doubt, boil it

If you are ever unsure whether water is safe to drink, a rolling boil for a minute (then cooled) is your simplest safeguard. Keep some purification tablets on hand as a backup to that.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Stored water is smart for any home, but it is essential for one and just sensible for the other.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs on city water, your taps usually keep flowing even during a power outage, because the utility pushes the water to you. So stored water here is a nice-to-have — good for a rare water-main break or a boil advisory, but not something your daily comfort depends on.

- Your water usually keeps flowing in a power outage, so stored water is a backup, not a lifeline.
- A few gallons and some bottled water cover the occasional main break or advisory.
- You can focus your outage planning on food, heat, and comfort.
- Still, a small store is cheap peace of mind for any home.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a well, stored water is not optional — it is the one layer that works no matter what, because your pump needs power to run. This is the guide's true home.

- No power means no water, so stored water is your reliable lifeline, not a nicety.
- Keep several days' worth, plus extra for flushing, washing, and animals.
- Fill the tub and containers whenever a storm is forecast.
- Even with a generator or battery, keep stored water underneath — it never fails.

★ Not sure how much you need?

A minute of arithmetic — people, days, and animals — gives you a target. Call me at (330) 200-8042 and we will work out a sensible amount for your household.

Don't forget the animals

Out here, the water plan has to cover more than people. Animals need water every day, outage or not.

A dog or cat needs only a modest amount, but chickens, horses, cattle, and other livestock can need a great deal — often far more than the people in the house. If you keep animals, their water is a real part of your store, and it is easy to underestimate.

Think through each animal's daily needs and add that to your total. For livestock, larger containers, troughs filled ahead of a storm, or a way to run the pump in sessions all help. General-use water is fine for most animals, though keep it clean. Our conserving-water guide has ideas for stretching supply.

✓ Fill troughs before the storm

If you keep livestock, topping up troughs and tanks before an outage buys you a lot of time. Animals cannot wait, so plan their water first, alongside your family's.

Where to keep your water

A little thought about where you store it makes it easier to use and keeps it in good shape.

- **Cool, dark, and steady** — a basement, closet, or interior corner beats a hot garage or sunny window.
- **Spread it around** — some in the kitchen, some in the basement — so a little is always within reach.
- **Off the bare floor** — a board or shelf under containers helps, especially on concrete.
- **Away from chemicals** — never store drinking water near fuel, cleaners, or pesticides.

Keeping some water in more than one spot means you are never far from a jug, and it spreads out the weight. A few gallons in a kitchen cupboard plus a larger reserve in the basement is a sensible, simple arrangement.

✓ A little here, more there

Keep a small, handy supply where you cook and a larger reserve tucked away. That way everyday reach and long-outage backup are both covered.

A simple plan to get started this week

Do not let 'perfect' get in the way of 'started.' Here is an easy on-ramp.

- ❑ This week: fill a few clean, food-grade containers with drinking water and date them.
- ❑ Add a case or two of sealed bottled water to the pantry.
- ❑ Set aside a couple of lidded buckets for flushing water.
- ❑ Find your water heater's drain valve, so you know your hidden reserve.
- ❑ Write 'fill the tub' at the top of your storm checklist.

That is a real, working water store, built in an afternoon for very little. From there you can add larger containers over time if you like. The point is to start — a modest store beats a perfect plan you never act on.

★ Start today, add later

The first few gallons are the most important ones. Get those in place this week, and build from there at your own pace. Call (330) 200-8042 if you would like a nudge or a hand.

It is not just for emergencies

A water store earns its keep beyond big outages, which makes it even easier to justify.

A stored supply helps with the small stuff too — a brief pump problem, a day the well company is servicing your system, or a short outage that empties the pressure tank before power returns. Having water on hand turns all of those from a scramble into a shrug.

It also means you rotate and use the water naturally, which keeps it fresh. Use a jug for the garden or the pets, then refill it. A store you actually use is a store that stays ready. Our pressure-tank guide explains those short gaps in supply.

✓ Use it and refill it

Rotating stored water through everyday uses keeps it fresh and keeps you in the habit. It is a store that quietly takes care of itself.

A few common myths, gently corrected

These come up often, and believing them can leave you short. Here is the honest version.

The myth	The honest truth
A few water bottles will do.	Plan gallons per person per day, plus flushing and washing water.
Stored water goes bad quickly.	Kept clean, cool, and sealed, it lasts a good while — just rotate it.
Old milk jugs are fine for storage.	They break down and are hard to clean — use food-grade containers.
I will just fill up when the power goes out.	The pump stops with the power — fill before, or use the tank's reserve fast.

! The 'fill up later' myth is the costly one

On a well, you cannot fill up after the power is out — the pump is off. Fill before the storm, or capture the pressure tank's small reserve immediately.

What I can do — and what stays simple

This is the one guide where you truly need no professional at all. Here is where I can still help.

- **What I do:** help you work out how much water your household and animals need, set up a simple rotation, and fold water into your whole outage plan.
- **What you can do alone:** honestly, most of it — fill clean containers, date them, and keep them cool. It is that simple.
- **A well or plumbing pro** is only needed for the system itself — not for storing water.

I am a patient tech helper, and I will never sell you gadgets you do not need. For stored water, the honest truth is that a few containers and a little habit do the job. If you would like help fitting it into a bigger plan, that is where I come in.

★ The advice here is free and simple

No purchase, no visit needed for this layer. But if you want a hand building your whole plan around it, call or text (330) 200-8042.

The mistakes that catch people out

Most stored-water regret comes from a few simple oversights.

- **Storing too little** — enough to drink but nothing for flushing, washing, or animals.
- **Waiting for a storm** to think about it, then having no warning one day.
- **Using poor containers** that leak, break down, or are hard to keep clean.
- **Never rotating it**, so it sits for years and tastes stale or worse.
- **Forgetting the animals**, whose needs can dwarf the family's.

Our common-mistakes guide covers each in detail. Every one is easy to avoid, and none of them costs much to fix — this is the friendliest layer of your whole plan.

✓ A little extra covers most mistakes

When in doubt, store a bit more than you think you need, in good containers, and rotate it. That single habit sidesteps nearly this whole list.

Questions worth asking yourself

A few minutes with these questions turns 'I should store water' into a real plan.

Q: How many people and animals am I planning for?

Count everyone, then multiply by the days you want to cover. Animals — especially livestock — can need the most.

Q: How many days should I plan for?

Aim for a longer rural outage, not just a few hours. Extra water costs little and covers a lot.

Q: Do I have good containers and a place to keep them?

Food-grade, sealable containers in a cool, dark spot. Spread some around so a little is always handy.

Q: What is my plan when a storm is forecast?

Fill the tub and top off containers before the power goes. Put it at the top of your storm checklist.

✓ Write your target down

Once you know your number of gallons, write it on your storm checklist. Then you are never guessing whether you have enough.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about storing water on a well home.

Q: How much water should I store?

A common guideline is about a gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking and cooking — plus extra for flushing, washing, and animals, which often needs more.

Q: How long does stored water last?

Kept clean, cool, sealed, and out of sunlight, it lasts a good while. Sealed store-bought water keeps longest; water you bottle yourself is best rotated more often.

Q: Can I drink water from my water heater?

Yes — the tank holds many gallons you can drain into a clean container. Let hot water cool first, and know where the drain valve is ahead of time.

Q: What if I run out during a long outage?

Draw on your water heater, use a generator to run the pump in sessions, or, if unsure of a source, boil water to make it safe. Our conserving-water guide helps you stretch what you have.

★ Still have a question? That is what I am here for

There is no silly question. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we will make sure your water plan fits your home.

A gentle word about cost

This is the good-news page. Of everything in this category, stored water costs the least by far.

A few food-grade containers and some bottled water is a modest, one-time expense, and much of it you may have on hand already. There is no installation, no fuel, no electrician — just water and a little space. Dollar for dollar, it is the most protection you can buy in this whole category.

That is exactly why I urge everyone to start here, before spending on a generator or battery. It costs almost nothing, it helps no matter what else you do, and it can be done this week. If money is tight, this is the layer that still gives you real peace of mind.

★ The best value in the whole plan

You will not find cheaper insurance than a few gallons of stored water. Start there. And when you are ready for the next layer, my first visit is a flat \$99 with a 30-day come-back-free guarantee.

Bringing it all together

If this guide did its job, you can build your water store this week. Here it is in three lines.

- ❑ **How much:** gallons per person per day for several days, plus flushing, washing, and animals.
- ❑ **How to keep it:** clean, food-grade, sealed containers, cool and dark, dated and rotated.
- ❑ **When a storm looms:** fill the tub and containers before the power goes.

That is the whole thing. It is the simplest, cheapest, most reliable layer of your entire plan, and it is the one you can start today. Do this one thing and you are already ahead.

★ 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 building a simple stored-water backup 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 Much Water to Store

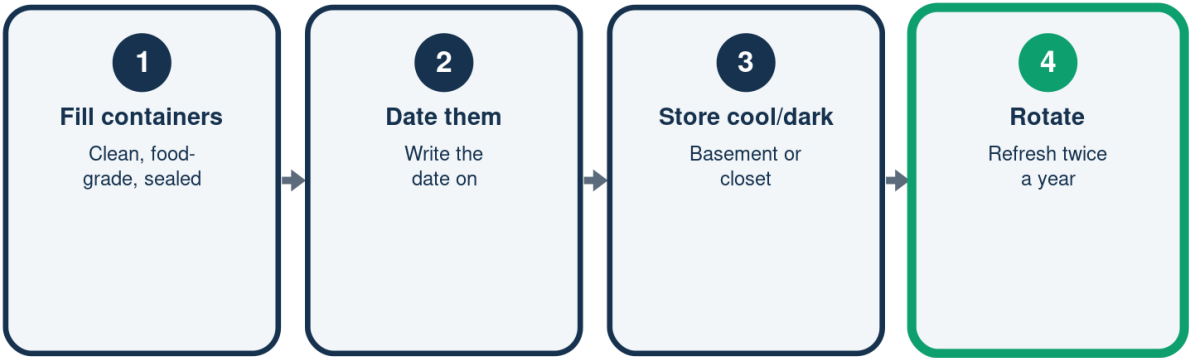
Think in daily needs, not single bottles

	Use	Rough guide
Drinking/cooking	~1 gallon	per person/day
Flushing	A bucket	per flush
Washing	Extra daily	general-use
Animals	Varies -- can	be the most

Plan several days, plus extra beyond drinking.

Building Your Water Store

An afternoon's work



Simple, cheap, and you can start this week.

Good vs. Risky Containers

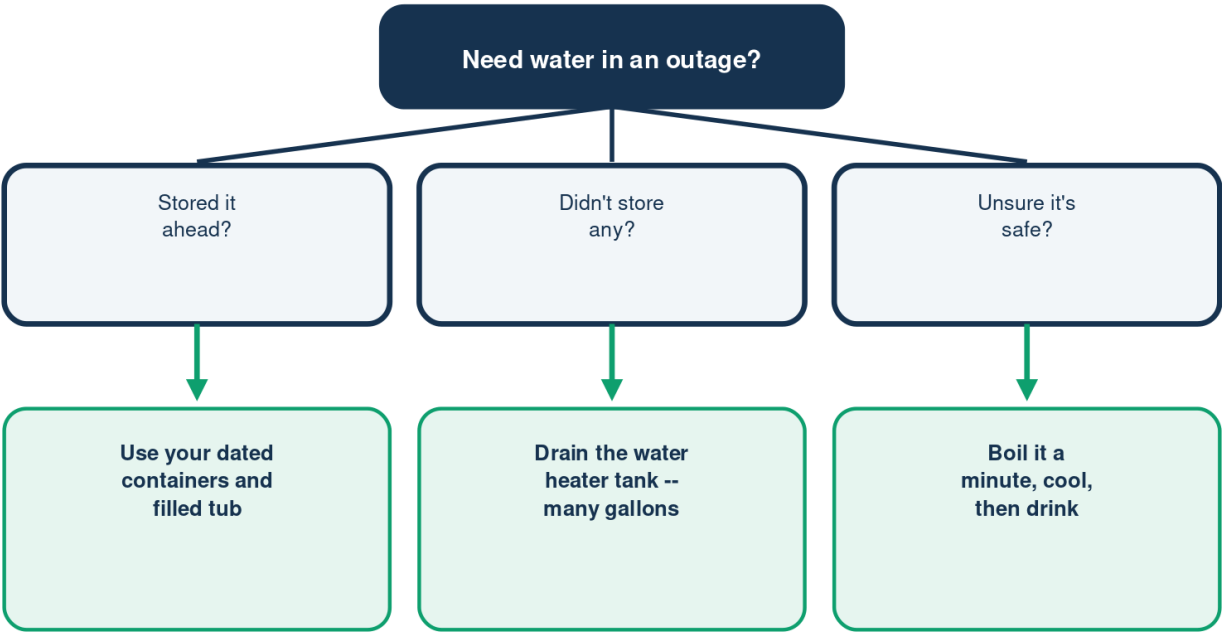
What to keep drinking water in

	Good choice	Risky choice
Type	Food-grade jug	Old milk jug
Seal	Tight lid	Loose or worn
Cleanliness	Easy to clean	Traps residue
Store-bought	Sealed bottles	-- reliable

Save old jugs for non-drinking uses, if at all.

Where's My Water in an Outage?

Your reserves, from first to last



On a well, fill before the storm -- the pump stops with the power.

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



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.

BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will
make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness,
no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



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*



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

Use of these guides is subject to our Terms of Use (billshometech.com/terms-of-use).

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

For general information only — not professional advice. Use at your own risk. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech