



An Extended Guide · No. 1711

Winter Well and Water Concerns

When cold and no
water arrive together

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. A winter outage is the hardest kind on a well home — no water, and freezing cold on top of it. A little preparation for the cold keeps a rough day from turning into a burst-pipe disaster.

Winter well and water concerns

Ice storms knock out power when it is coldest, rural lines come back last, and now you have two problems at once — no water and the risk of freezing. This guide helps you get ready for exactly that.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. Our winters bring the outages that worry me most for well-water families. It is not just the inconvenience of no water — it is that the cold can freeze and burst pipes and crack expensive equipment while the power is out. That turns a hard day into a costly repair.

The good news is that a winter outage is very manageable with a little forethought. Protect the parts that can freeze, keep some heat going, and know a few cold-weather water tricks, and you will come through it just fine. Let's get you ready.

★ Want a winter-ready check?

Before the cold sets in is the best time to look at your setup. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we will make sure your well and water plan is ready for winter.

The whole thing, in about a minute

If you remember only these things, a winter outage will not catch you out.

- ❑ Winter outages are common and long out here — ice storms hit hard and rural lines come back last.
- ❑ The big added danger is freezing — burst pipes and cracked equipment while the power is off.
- ❑ Protect the pressure tank, pump controls, and exposed pipes from cold — insulation and a little heat.
- ❑ In winter, heat comes first on your generator — a gas furnace still needs electricity to run.
- ❑ Know how to shut off and drain your pipes if heat is lost for a long time.
- ❑ Melt clean snow for the thirsty jobs, and keep seniors warm — cold is a real health risk.

✓ Two problems, one calm plan

A winter outage is no water plus the cold. Handle the freezing risk and keep some heat going, and it becomes just another manageable outage.

Why winter outages are the hardest

It helps to understand why the cold stacks the deck, so you can prepare for all of it.

Winter storms — especially ice — are among the most common causes of long power outages, bringing down lines and limbs across the countryside. And because rural homes are restored last, a winter outage out here can stretch for a day or more, right when it is coldest and most dangerous.

On top of no water, the cold threatens your plumbing and equipment. Water that is not moving can freeze and burst pipes; a pressure tank or pump controls in an unheated space can be damaged. And if your heat depends on electricity — as most furnaces do, even gas ones — the house itself cools down. That is three problems the cold hands you at once.

! The cold multiplies the trouble

A summer outage is an inconvenience. A winter one adds freezing pipes, cracked equipment, and a cooling house. That is why winter deserves extra preparation.

Protecting your water system from freezing

This is the heart of winter readiness — keeping the vulnerable parts from freezing while the power is out.

- **The pressure tank and controls** — if they sit in an unheated basement, well house, or pit, they can freeze; insulate the space and keep a little heat there.
- **Exposed and above-ground pipes** — insulate them, and consider heat tape (which itself needs power) for the most vulnerable runs.
- **The wellhead** — the well itself is usually below the frost line, but any exposed plumbing at the surface needs protection.
- **Outdoor spigots and lines** — drain and shut off outdoor faucets before winter so they cannot freeze and burst.

Much of this is done before winter, not during an outage — insulation, a sealed well cap, and knowing which parts are exposed. Then, during a cold outage, keeping some heat in the space where your tank and controls live is what protects them. Our pressure-tank and pump-protection guides go deeper.

✓ Prepare before the cold, not during

The best freezing protection happens in the fall — insulate, seal, and know your exposed parts. Then an outage is about keeping a little heat going, not scrambling.

In winter, heat comes first

This is the one place a winter outage plan differs from a summer one. The order of priorities changes.

In a cold outage, keeping the house warm enough protects both your family and your plumbing. So if you have a generator, heat often takes priority alongside water. Here is the catch many folks miss: a gas or propane furnace still needs electricity to run its blower and controls, so it stops in an outage just like an electric one. Your generator can bring it back.

So your winter generator sessions might run the furnace and the well pump together, keeping the house warm and refilling your water. If your generator is small, you may alternate — but keeping the house above freezing is worth prioritizing, because a frozen, burst pipe is a far bigger problem than a chilly evening. Our sizing guide helps you plan for both.

! A gas furnace still needs power

Do not assume your gas or propane furnace will run in an outage — its blower and controls are electric. Plan to power it, or have a backup heat source, so the house does not freeze.

A backup heat source is worth its weight

Out in the country, an independent way to heat is one of the best winter investments there is.

A woodstove, pellet stove, or other non-electric heat source keeps your family warm and your pipes safe even if the generator is resting or runs short of fuel. Many rural homes have one, and in a long winter outage it is a genuine comfort — warmth that needs no power at all, plus a place to melt snow for water.

If you rely on electric heat or a furnace, think about a backup heat source before winter. Even keeping the household in one well-heated room — closing off the rest — makes a small heat source go further. Safe heating matters: never use a stove, oven, or outdoor heater indoors for warmth, as those can produce carbon monoxide.

! Never heat with an oven or outdoor heater indoors

Kitchen stoves, ovens, and outdoor or camp heaters can produce deadly carbon monoxide indoors. Use only heat sources made for indoor use, and keep battery-backup carbon-monoxide alarms working.

If the heat is lost for a long time

Sometimes, despite everything, the house gets cold and stays cold. Knowing how to protect your plumbing then can save you thousands.

If you cannot keep the house above freezing — the generator fails, the fuel runs out, and there is no backup heat — the safest move is to drain your plumbing so there is no water left in the pipes to freeze and burst. That means knowing where your main shutoff is and how to open the taps and drain the lines. It is far better than coming home to burst pipes.

This is worth learning before you ever need it — where the shutoff is, how to drain the system, and how to handle the water heater and pressure tank. Your plumber or well pro can show you once, and it becomes a skill you keep. If you are leaving a well home empty in deep winter, draining down is often the wise choice.

✓ Know how to drain down

Learn where your main shutoff is and how to drain your pipes, before winter. If the house is going to freeze, empty pipes cannot burst. It is a skill worth having.

Snow — a winter water source

Winter takes your water away but leaves some at your doorstep. Used wisely, snow eases the load.

Clean snow, melted by your heat source, is a ready supply for flushing, cleaning, and other non-drinking jobs. It takes a surprising amount of snow to make a little water, so it is better for the thirsty jobs than for drinking — but keeping those jobs off your stored drinking water is a real help in a long outage.

For drinking, melt and then boil it, since snow can carry whatever it landed on. And gather snow from a clean spot, away from roads and where animals have been. A pot of snow melting by the woodstove is a quiet winter helper. Our conserving-water guide covers this too.

✓ Melt snow by your heat source

A pot of clean snow by the woodstove becomes flushing and cleaning water for free. For drinking, boil it after melting. It stretches your stored water nicely.

Keeping everyone warm and safe

In a cold outage, staying warm is not just about comfort — for some folks it is about health. A few habits keep everyone safe.

- **Gather in one room** — close off the rest of the house and keep one room warm; it is easier to heat and cozier.
- **Layer up** — warm clothes, blankets, and hats hold body heat with no power at all.
- **Check on the vulnerable** — seniors and anyone with health needs feel the cold sooner and more dangerously.
- **Keep CO alarms working** — with battery backup, since any combustion heat source carries a carbon-monoxide risk.
- **Have warm food and drink** — if you can heat it safely, it lifts spirits and body temperature.

The cold is hardest on older adults, whose bodies hold heat less well and who may not feel how cold they have become. If you or a loved one is a senior, a warm room and regular checking are important. Our guide on medical and senior water needs covers more.

! Cold is a real danger for seniors

Older adults can get dangerously cold without realizing it. In a winter outage, keep them in a warm room, check on them often, and do not wait to seek help if someone seems confused or very cold.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Winter cold challenges any home, but a well home faces the water side on top of it.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs on city water, a winter outage still brings cold and freezing-pipe risk, but your water keeps flowing, which is a real help — you can let a faucet drip to fight freezing, and you have water for warmth and comfort. Your winter plan is mostly about heat.

- City water keeps flowing, so you can let a tap drip to help prevent freezing.
- Your winter focus is heat and staying warm, not finding water.
- The same backup-heat and carbon-monoxide safety ideas apply.
- A little stored water is still smart for a rare main break.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a well, winter hands you both problems — no water and the freezing risk — and you cannot simply let a tap drip, since the pump is off. This guide is squarely for you.

- No running water AND freezing risk — protect equipment and keep stored water.
- You cannot drip a faucet to fight freezing, so keep heat in the vulnerable spaces.
- Heat comes first on the generator — a gas furnace still needs power.
- Melt snow for the thirsty jobs, and know how to drain down if heat is lost.

★ Let's winter-proof your well home

The fall is the time to get ready for a winter outage. Call me at (330) 200-8042 and we will make sure your well, water, and heat plan is ready for the cold.

Getting ready before winter arrives

Most winter-outage protection is done in the mild days of fall. Here is the pre-season list.

- ❑ Insulate exposed pipes and the space around your pressure tank and controls.
- ❑ Drain and shut off outdoor spigots and hoses.
- ❑ Check that your well cap is sealed and the wellhead area is protected.
- ❑ Service the generator and lay in fuel; make sure it can run the furnace.
- ❑ Sort out a backup heat source and stock it — wood, pellets, or the like.
- ❑ Learn where your main water shutoff is and how to drain the system.

An afternoon in the fall spares you a crisis in January. Every item here is easier to do in mild weather with the power on than in a cold, dark outage. Tie it to another fall chore so it becomes a habit.

★ A fall check is the best insurance

Let me help you run through your winter readiness before the cold sets in. Call or text (330) 200-8042 and we will get your well home ready for the season.

During a winter outage — the routine

When the power does go out in the cold, here is the calm order of things.

- ❑ Capture water from the pressure tank's reserve right away, as always.
- ❑ Get heat going — start the generator for the furnace, or light your backup heat.
- ❑ Keep the vulnerable spaces (tank, controls, pipes) above freezing.
- ❑ Run the pump in sessions to refill water, alongside the furnace.
- ❑ Gather everyone in one warm room and check on seniors often.
- ❑ If heat cannot be kept and the house is freezing, drain the pipes.

The winter twist on the usual game plan is simply that heat shares top priority with water, and freezing is the danger to watch. Everything else — capturing water, running in sessions — works the same. Our game-plan guide covers the general routine.

✓ Heat and water, together

In winter, your generator sessions do double duty: warm the house and refill the water. Keeping the house above freezing protects your pipes as well as your family.

The wellhead and controls in the cold

The well itself is tougher than you might think, but its exposed parts still need care.

The water in your well sits below the frost line, so the deep part of your system does not freeze. The vulnerable parts are at and above the surface: the wellhead fittings, any above-ground pipe, and the pressure tank and controls if they live in an unheated space. Those are what winter can damage.

Keep the well cap sealed and in good shape, insulate exposed surface plumbing, and make sure the pressure tank's space stays above freezing during an outage. If your controls are in a well pit or unheated well house, ask your well pro about protecting them for winter. Our pump-protection guide has more on keeping controls healthy.

✓ The deep well is fine — guard the surface parts

Your well water is safe below the frost line. Focus your winter protection on the wellhead, exposed pipes, and the tank and controls above ground.

If a pipe freezes anyway

Sometimes a pipe freezes despite your best efforts. Knowing what to do can prevent it from bursting.

If you find a frozen pipe — no water from a tap you expect to work, or a section of pipe frosty and cold — act gently. Warm it slowly with towels soaked in warm water, or a hair dryer if you have power, working from the open-tap end back. Never use an open flame, which can damage the pipe or start a fire. Open the nearest tap so melting water has somewhere to go.

If a pipe has already burst, shut off the water at the main to stop the flood, and call a plumber. Knowing where that main shutoff is — before an emergency — is one of the most valuable things a homeowner can learn. It turns a disaster into a manageable repair.

! Never thaw a pipe with an open flame

A torch or open flame can burst the pipe or start a fire. Use gentle warmth — warm towels or a hair dryer — and open the tap so the thaw has somewhere to go.

A few common myths, gently corrected

Winter brings its own myths, and some can cost you dearly. Here is the honest version.

The myth	The honest truth
My gas furnace will run without power.	Its blower and controls are electric — it stops in an outage.
My well will freeze in a cold outage.	The deep well is below frost; the surface parts are the risk.
I can drip a faucet to stop freezing.	Not on a well with the pump off — keep heat on the pipes instead.
A camp heater indoors is fine for one night.	It can produce deadly carbon monoxide — never indoors.

! The indoor-heater myth is the deadly one

Never run a camp heater, grill, or generator indoors for warmth. Carbon monoxide is invisible and can kill overnight. Use only indoor-rated heat and keep CO alarms working.

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

Here is my honest role in getting your well home winter-ready.

- **What I do:** help you run a fall readiness check, plan heat-first generator use, set up your winter outage routine, and make sure seniors are looked after.
- **A licensed electrician** handles the generator hookup and any heat-tape wiring.
- **A plumber or well pro** handles pipe insulation, draining guidance, wellhead protection, and any freeze damage.

I am a patient tech helper with 30-plus years of experience, not a licensed electrician, plumber, or well contractor — and I will always be clear about that line. What I bring is help getting ready and a calm hand during a cold outage, plus lining up the right pro for the hands-on work.

★ A calm hand for a cold night

Winter outages are the ones folks worry about most. Let me help you feel ready for them. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

The mistakes that catch people out

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

- **Assuming the gas furnace will run** without power, and having no heat plan.
- **No backup heat source**, so the house cools toward freezing.
- **Not protecting the tank and pipes**, leading to a burst and a big repair.
- **Not knowing the main shutoff**, so a leak becomes a flood.
- **Using unsafe indoor heat** — a deadly carbon-monoxide risk.

Our common-mistakes guide covers each in detail. A fall readiness check and a heat plan quietly remove nearly all of them.

✓ Prepare in fall, prioritize heat

The two habits that avoid most winter trouble: get ready before the cold, and put heat first once it arrives. Do those and a winter outage is manageable.

Questions worth asking before winter

A few good questions now spare you a cold, wet surprise later.

Q: Will my furnace run on my generator?

Confirm your furnace's blower and controls are included in your generator plan. A gas furnace still needs power to run.

Q: Which parts of my water system can freeze?

Ask your well pro about the pressure tank, controls, and any exposed or above-ground plumbing, and how to protect them.

Q: Where is my main water shutoff, and how do I drain the pipes?

Learn this before winter. If the house is going to freeze, empty pipes cannot burst.

Q: Do I have a safe backup heat source?

A woodstove or pellet stove keeps you warm and your pipes safe if the generator rests — and never an oven or camp heater indoors.

✓ Ask in the fall

Every one of these is easy to sort out in mild weather and hard to figure out in a cold, dark outage. Make the fall your preparation season.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about winter and well water.

Q: Will my well pump or pipes freeze in a winter outage?

The deep well is below the frost line and safe. The risks are the pressure tank, controls, and exposed or above-ground pipes — keep those insulated and above freezing.

Q: Will my gas furnace work if the power is out?

No — its blower and controls need electricity. Plan to run it on your generator, or have a safe backup heat source, so the house does not freeze.

Q: Can I let a faucet drip to prevent freezing, like in town?

Not on a well with the pump off — there is no continuous water to drip. Instead, keep heat on the vulnerable pipes, or drain the system if heat is lost.

Q: Can I melt snow for water?

Yes — melt clean snow by your heat source for flushing and cleaning. For drinking, boil it after melting. It stretches your stored water in a snowy outage.

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

There is no silly question, especially about winter safety. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we will get you ready.

A gentle word about cost

Winter readiness is mostly cheap preparation that prevents a very expensive disaster.

Pipe insulation, a sealed well cap, and knowing your shutoffs cost little. A backup heat source is a larger investment, but one that pays off in comfort and safety every winter. Compared with the cost of a burst pipe — water damage, repairs, and a ruined day — winter preparation is a bargain.

I do not sell heaters, generators, or plumbing and earn nothing on the work, so my advice is just honest advice. The most valuable things here — knowing your shutoff, keeping heat on the pipes, having a safe backup heat source — protect a great deal for very little.

★ Cheap prevention beats costly repair

A little fall preparation saves a lot of winter grief. My first visit is a flat \$99 with a 30-day come-back-free guarantee, and I will line up a plumber or well pro for the hands-on winterizing.

Bringing it all together

If this guide did its job, a winter outage feels manageable rather than frightening. Here it is in three lines.

- ❑ **Before winter:** insulate, seal, stock a backup heat source, and learn your shutoff.
- ❑ **During an outage:** heat first, protect the freezable parts, run the pump in sessions.
- ❑ **If heat is lost:** drain the pipes so they cannot burst, and keep everyone warm and safe.

A winter outage asks a bit more of you than a summer one, but with these habits it is entirely manageable. Protect the cold-vulnerable parts, keep some heat going, and look after each other — and you will come through just fine.

★ 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 getting your well home ready for winter outages 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

Summer Outage vs. Winter Outage

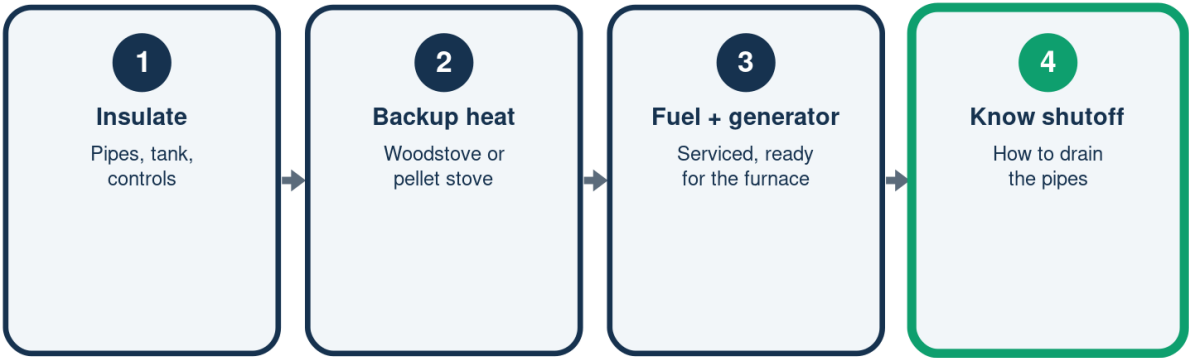
Why winter asks more of you

	Summer	Winter
No water?	Yes	Yes
Freezing risk?	No	Yes -- pipes, tank
Heat needed?	No	Yes -- house + pipes
Top priority	Water	Heat AND water

Winter adds cold on top of no water -- prepare for both.

Getting Ready Before Winter

Done in mild fall weather



An afternoon in fall spares a crisis in January.

What Freezes, What Doesn't

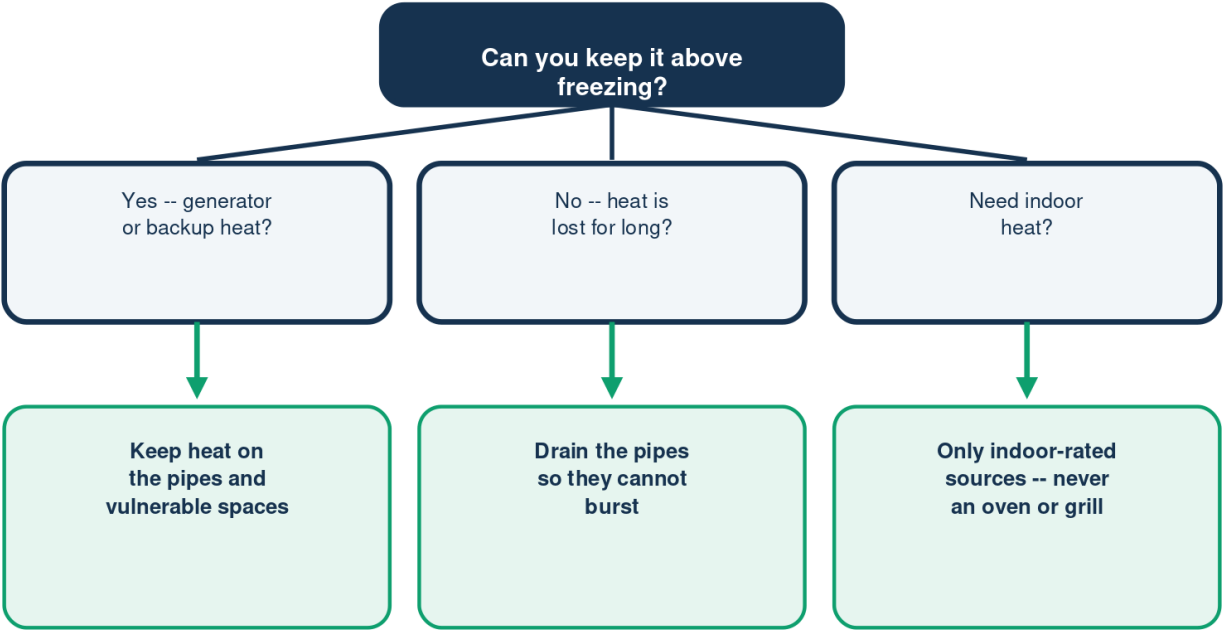
Guard the surface, not the deep well

	Safe (deep)	At risk (surface)
Well water	Below frost line	-
Pressure tank	-	If unheated
Pump controls	-	If exposed
Above-ground pipe	-	Yes -- insulate

The deep well is fine; protect the surface parts.

The House Is Getting Cold

Protecting pipes when heat fails



Never heat indoors with an oven, grill, or camp heater -- CO kills.

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