BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS · NO. 102

Leak Sensors & Water Shutoff

Catching leaks early, guarding the basement,
and stopping the water before it does damage

A plain-English guide to keeping water where it belongs

Take your time — you can't break it

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For leak sensors, sump alarms & shutoff valves · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your leak-protection manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. It covers the little sensors that beep or text you when they get wet, the alarms that watch a sump pump, and the bigger valves that can shut off a whole house's water on their own. Every gadget comes with what it actually does *for you*, honest costs, and slow step-by-step directions. If an app on your phone looks a little different from what's described here, don't worry — the words you're looking for are usually the same.

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PART 1

Why Water Matters & Where Leaks Start

The quiet ways water gets loose in a home, the spots worth watching in a Northeast Ohio house, and the one valve every household should be able to find in the dark.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you're reading this, you probably have a basement, a water heater, a washing machine and a few sinks — in other words, a normal home with plenty of places for water to sneak out. Maybe a neighbor had a pipe burst last winter, or your sump pump made a strange noise during a spring storm, or a family member handed you a little gadget and said, "Put this by the water heater." Whatever brought you here, you're in the right place.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years doing professional technology work, and these days I help folks right here in Portage County, Ohio, get comfortable with the gadgets in their homes. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain things sitting at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, and with every new word explained the first time it shows up.

Leak protection is simpler than it sounds

The whole subject comes down to three plain ideas. First, **notice** water where it shouldn't be — that's what a leak sensor does. Second, **tell someone** who can do something about it — that's the beep, the phone alert or the text to your daughter. Third, **stop the water** — by turning off a valve yourself, or with a smart valve that does it for you. Every gadget in this guide is just a different way of doing one or more of those three things.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this really gives you

Peace of mind when you're away for the weekend, upstairs asleep or wintering somewhere warm. A small leak caught today is a towel and a phone call. The same leak found three weeks later can be ruined carpet, warped floors and a long insurance claim. A twenty-dollar sensor in the right spot can make that difference.

Take your time — you can't break it

Nothing in the first two-thirds of this guide involves tools or plumbing. Setting up a leak sensor is about as hard as setting up a new app on your phone. The parts that *do* involve pipes, like installing a whole-home shutoff valve, are clearly marked as jobs for a licensed plumber. And if you'd like a hand with the gadget side, that's exactly what my **Leak Sensor Setup** service is for — more on that in Chapter 37.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Why a Little Water Is a Big Deal

Water is patient. A drip under a sink doesn't make noise. A slow seep from a water heater soaks into the basement carpet before anyone sees it. And when a hose or pipe truly lets go, water can pour out much faster than most people imagine — a burst supply line can soak a room in minutes.

Why time matters so much

- **Damage grows by the hour.** Drywall, wood floors, carpet pad and cabinets soak up water and keep soaking it up as long as the water keeps coming.
- **Mold can start quickly.** Damp materials that stay wet for a day or two can start growing mold, which is a health concern and an expensive cleanup.
- **Hidden leaks hide.** The worst leaks are often behind a wall, under a cabinet floor or in a corner of the basement you rarely visit.
- **Nobody's home is the worst case.** A leak that starts when you leave for a week has a week to do its work — unless something notices.

What a leak sensor changes

A leak sensor (also called a **water sensor** or **leak detector**) is a small device — usually about the size of a hockey puck or a deck of cards — that sits on the floor. On the bottom are two or more little metal contacts. When water touches them, the sensor knows, and it sounds an alarm, sends an alert to your phone, or both. It can't stop the water by itself, but it turns a silent leak into a noisy one, and that is often all you need.

GOOD TO KNOW

Leak sensors don't replace good habits

A sensor is an early-warning system, not a repair. It still pays to know where your main water valve is (Chapter 4), to replace old washer hoses, and to keep the heat on in winter. Think of the sensors as a smoke alarm for water: you still want to be careful with the stove.

CHAPTER 3

Where Leaks Start in an Ohio Home

Most household leaks start in the same handful of places. Homes in Northeast Ohio add two special worries: basements that can take on water during heavy rain and snowmelt, and pipes that can freeze during a hard January cold snap.

Where	What goes wrong
Water heater	Tanks wear out with age and can drip from the bottom or the relief valve. When one fails, it can empty dozens of gallons onto the floor.
Washing machine	The rubber fill hoses behind the washer can crack or burst. The drain hose can pop out of its standpipe.
Under the sinks	Kitchen and bathroom supply lines, shutoff valves and drain traps loosen or corrode over time. The cabinet floor hides a slow drip.
Toilets	The supply line, the fill valve inside the tank and the wax seal under the toilet can all leak onto the floor.
Refrigerator ice maker	The thin water line behind the fridge can kink, crack or come loose — especially after the fridge is moved.
Dishwasher	The supply and drain connections sit behind the toe-kick panel, out of sight.
Sump pit	If the sump pump fails or can't keep up, groundwater rises and spills onto the basement floor (Part 5).
Basement walls & floor drains	Heavy rain, snowmelt and backed-up floor drains can let water in from outside.
Pipes on outside walls	Pipes in crawl spaces, garages, unheated porches and outside walls can freeze and split in a cold snap.

TIP

Start with your top three

For most homes, start with three: the water heater, the washing machine and the kitchen sink — plus the sump pit if you have one. Add more later; they're inexpensive.

Northeast Ohio winters

Frozen pipes are a real risk here. Water expands when it freezes, and that pressure can split a copper or plastic pipe. Often nothing happens while it's frozen — the leak starts when the pipe *thaws*, sometimes days later. That's why freeze alerts matter so much in this part of the country. Chapter 20 covers them in detail.

CHAPTER 4

Find Your Main Water Shutoff Today

If you take only one thing from this whole guide, make it this: **know where your main water shutoff valve is, and be able to turn it.** Every leak sensor in the world is just an alarm. The main valve is what actually stops a flood.

Where to look

- **City water:** the main shutoff is usually in the basement, on the wall facing the street, near where the water pipe comes through the foundation. It's often right next to the **water meter** (the gauge that measures your water use).
- **Well water:** look near the pressure tank, usually in the basement or a utility room. There is normally a valve on the pipe leaving the tank toward the house.
- **Homes without a basement:** check the garage, a utility closet, near the water heater, or a crawl-space access panel.
- **Condos and apartments:** you may have a shutoff for your unit in a closet or near the water heater. Ask your building manager to show you.

Two common kinds of valve

Valve	How to turn it off
Lever (ball valve)	A flat handle. When it lines up with the pipe, water is on. Turn it a quarter turn so it's crosswise to the pipe, and water is off.
Round wheel (gate or globe valve)	Turn it clockwise — "righty-tighty" — several turns until it stops. Older wheel valves can be stiff; go gently.

Practice once, on a calm day

1. Find the valve and clear anything stored in front of it, so you can reach it in a hurry.
2. Turn it off the way the table above describes.
3. Open a faucet upstairs. After a few seconds the flow should slow to nothing.
4. Turn the valve back on (lever back in line with the pipe, or wheel counterclockwise).
5. Hang a bright tag on the valve that says **MAIN WATER SHUTOFF**, and show everyone in the house.

HEADS UP

If the valve is stuck or drips

Old valves sometimes refuse to turn or start to drip at the stem after they're moved. Don't force it with a big wrench — that can snap an old valve. Call a plumber and ask about replacing it with a modern quarter-turn ball valve. It's a common, modest job, and it also makes the valve ready for a smart shutoff later (Part 6).

FROM BILL

Write it down

Note where your valve is in the cheat-sheet at the end of this guide (Chapter 38), and tell the neighbor or family member who would come over in an emergency. In a real leak, nobody wants to be hunting with a flashlight.

CHAPTER 5

The Kinds of Leak Protection, from Simple to Smart

Leak protection comes in four broad kinds. You can use just one, or mix them. Here's the whole family at a glance, from the simplest to the most complete.

Kind	What it does	Typical cost
Simple battery alarm	Beeps loudly when it gets wet. No app, no Wi-Fi.	Inexpensive
Smart leak sensor	Beeps *and* sends an alert to your phone, even when you're away.	Low to moderate; some need a hub
Sump pump alarm	Warns you when water in the sump pit rises too high.	Low to moderate
Automatic shutoff valve	Watches the water flowing into the whole house and can shut it off by itself.	Several hundred dollars, plus a plumber

How they work together

The pieces fit together nicely. Sensors sit where leaks start. A sump alarm watches the basement's biggest risk. And a shutoff valve on the main line is the muscle: when a sensor or the valve itself notices trouble, the water stops. Many systems let the sensors tell the valve to close, so the whole thing works as a team.

GOOD TO KNOW

Words you'll see

Hub or **gateway**: a small box that plugs into power (and sometimes your router) and relays messages between the sensors and the internet. **App**: the program on your phone where alerts arrive. **Push notification**: a message that pops up on your phone's screen. **Smart home**: devices that talk to your phone and to each other.

TIP

Already have a smart home?

If you already use smart plugs, a Ring alarm, or an Alexa or Google speaker, you may be able to add a leak sensor to the system you have. Bill's **Building a Smart Home** and **Smart Plugs & Switches** manuals explain hubs and apps in more detail.

PART 2

Choosing Leak Sensors

Plain-English tours of each kind of sensor — what it needs, what it costs to run, and who it suits best — ending with a simple way to choose.

CHAPTER 6

Simple Battery Alarms (No App Needed)

The simplest leak sensor is a small battery-powered alarm. Set it on the floor, and if water touches the contacts on the bottom, it shrieks. That's it — no Wi-Fi, no app, no account.

Good things about them

- **Nothing to set up.** Put in the battery, press the test button, set it down.
- **No monthly cost** and nothing to go offline.
- **Very loud,** so you'll hear it from another room — if you're home.

The big limitation

A simple alarm only helps if someone hears it. If you're away, asleep on another floor, or hard of hearing, it may beep for hours with no one to respond. For a busy kitchen you're always in, that's fine. For a basement water heater in a house that's empty all day, a smart sensor that reaches your phone is a much better fit.

TIP

A good starter, even with smart sensors

Simple alarms are a fine, inexpensive way to cover a spot you walk past every day, like under the kitchen sink. Many people mix a few simple alarms with smart sensors in the places that matter most.

HEADS UP

Check the battery

A simple alarm can't tell your phone its battery is dying. Most chirp when the battery is low. Press the test button twice a year — the same days you check your smoke alarms is an easy habit.

CHAPTER 7

Wi-Fi Leak Sensors (Like Govee)

Wi-Fi leak sensors connect to your home internet, so an alert can reach your phone wherever you are. Some talk to Wi-Fi directly. Others, like **Govee**'s Wi-Fi Water Sensor kits, use a small **gateway** — a plug-in box that connects to your Wi-Fi and listens for the sensors.

How Govee's system works

- The sensors sit on the floor near likely leaks. Govee also includes probes that can reach into tight spots where water might drip.
- The gateway plugs into an outlet and joins your home Wi-Fi. Govee says one gateway can pair with up to 10 sensors.
- When a sensor gets wet, it sounds a loud alarm (Govee lists it as an adjustable 100-decibel alarm with a mute button) and the free **Govee Home** app sends an alert to your phone. Govee also lists email alerts.
- The sensors are rated IP66, which means they're sealed against dust and splashing water.

HEADS UP

2.4 GHz Wi-Fi only

Govee's water sensor gateway doesn't work with 5 GHz Wi-Fi. Most home routers broadcast both a 2.4 GHz and a 5 GHz signal, often under one name, so this is usually fine — but if setup fails, this is the first thing to check. Bill's Home Wi-Fi manual explains the two bands.

Who Wi-Fi sensors suit

They're a good choice when you want phone alerts without buying into a bigger system, and when your Wi-Fi reaches the basement well. If your router is two floors up and the signal is weak downstairs, a long-range hub-based system (Chapter 8) may be more dependable.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the internet goes down

A Wi-Fi sensor still beeps locally when the Wi-Fi is down, but the phone alert can't get out until the internet comes back. During a power outage, the gateway and your router lose power too, unless they're on a battery backup. That's worth remembering for sump pumps, which often fail during storms (Chapter 23).

SCAM ALERT

Download apps only from the real app store

Get the sensor's app from the Apple App Store or Google Play, using the name printed in the box. Ignore pop-up ads or texts offering a "leak alert app" or "water damage hotline" — real sensor makers never charge you to unlock an alert.

CHAPTER 8

Long-Range Hub Sensors (Like YoLink)

Some leak sensors use their own long-range radio instead of Wi-Fi. **YoLink** is a well-known example. Its sensors talk to a YoLink **hub** using a radio technology called **LoRa** (short for "long range"), and the hub connects to your home internet.

Why long range helps

- **Reaches far corners.** LoRa signals travel much farther than Wi-Fi and pass through floors and walls better, so a sensor in the far corner of the basement or a detached garage can still reach the hub.
- **Long battery life.** These low-power radios sip battery, so sensors can go a long time between changes.
- **One app for many devices.** The YoLink app also runs YoLink's sirens, temperature sensors and valve controllers.

The hub is required

YoLink sensors need a YoLink hub (YoLink sells several, including a SpeakerHub that can announce alerts out loud). They don't connect to Wi-Fi on their own, and they won't work with another company's hub. Buying a starter kit with a hub included is usually the easiest path.

GOOD TO KNOW

Sensor-to-valve pairing

YoLink describes a feature called **Control-D2D** (device-to-device) that pairs a leak sensor directly with a YoLink siren or valve controller, so the sensor can sound the siren or close the valve even if the internet is down. Follow the instructions that come with your devices to set it up, and test it once you have (Chapter 16).

TIP

Good for big or spread-out homes

If your house is large, your basement is far from the router, or you want to watch a detached garage or workshop too, a long-range hub system is often the most dependable choice.

CHAPTER 9

Zigbee and Z-Wave Sensors

If you already have a smart home hub, you'll see the words **Zigbee** and **Z-Wave** on many leak sensor boxes. These are two common "languages" that smart home devices use to talk to a hub. You don't need to understand how they work — you just need to match the sensor to your hub.

Matching the sensor to your hub

Label on the box	What it means for you
Z-Wave	Used by many security systems, including the original Ring Alarm. A Z-Wave sensor needs a Z-Wave hub or base station.
Zigbee	Used by many smart home hubs and some smart speakers with a built-in hub. A Zigbee sensor needs a Zigbee hub.
Matter / Thread	A newer standard meant to let devices from different brands work together. Check the box to see if a sensor supports it and what hub it needs.

HEADS UP

Read the box before you buy

A Zigbee sensor won't connect to a Z-Wave hub, and vice versa. If the box says "hub required," it means a specific kind of hub. When in doubt, buy the leak sensor made by the same company as your hub or alarm system — or ask me before you buy.

The big advantage of a hub-based sensor is that everything lives in one app. Your door sensors, lights and leak sensors can all work together — for example, flashing a lamp when the basement sensor gets wet. Bill's **Building a Smart Home** manual explains hubs step by step.

CHAPTER 10

Ring Flood & Freeze Sensors

Ring, the doorbell and alarm company, sells a leak sensor that does double duty: it notices water *and* warns you when a room gets cold enough to put pipes at risk. There are two versions, and it's worth knowing which one you have.

The newest model — no base station needed

Ring's **Flood & Freeze Sensor (Newest Model)** is part of its newer **Ring Sensors** line. It doesn't need a Ring Alarm base station or your Wi-Fi. Instead it connects over **Amazon Sidewalk**, a free, low-power network that shares a tiny slice of bandwidth from nearby Echo speakers and Ring devices. In November 2026 Ring listed it at $39.99. It runs on two AA batteries that Ring says can last up to six years, and it works in the regular Ring app.

HEADS UP

Check Sidewalk coverage first

Amazon Sidewalk coverage varies by neighborhood. Ring's product page lets you check your address. If coverage is thin, Ring says you can add your own compatible Sidewalk gateway — many Echo speakers and some Ring devices count.

The original model — with Ring Alarm

The original **Ring Alarm Flood & Freeze Sensor** connects to a **Ring Alarm Base Station** using Z-Wave. It needs to be within about 250 feet of the base station (a Ring range extender can help), and it uses a CR123A lithium battery. It sends a low-temperature alert when the air around it drops below 40°F and clears that alert once it warms above 45°F.

Alerts and spoken warnings

- The Ring app sends an alert to your phone when water or low temperature is detected.
- With the original model, the base station can say "Water Detected" or "Low Temperature Detected" out loud and pulse a blue light. You choose the sound under the sensor's **Device Details** > **Chirp Tones**.
- With a compatible paid Ring subscription, Ring's monitoring center can place automated calls to your emergency contacts when water or freezing temperatures are detected.

TIP

Already a Ring household?

If you have a Ring doorbell or alarm, a Ring sensor keeps everything in one app you already know. Bill's Ring manual covers the app itself; this guide covers where to put the sensor and what to do when it goes off.

CHAPTER 11

Which Kind Is Right for You?

With so many choices, it helps to start from how you live rather than from the gadgets. Answer these questions and the right fit usually becomes clear.

If this sounds like you…	Consider
You're home most of the time and just want a warning	Simple battery alarms
You travel or the house is empty during the day	Smart sensors with phone alerts
You already have Ring, a smart hub or an alarm system	A sensor that joins that system
Your basement is far from the router or the house is large	Long-range hub sensors (LoRa)
You have a sump pump	A sump high-water alarm, ideally with phone alerts
You winter away, or the home is a rental or second home	Smart sensors with freeze alerts, and consider an automatic shutoff valve

Questions to ask before you buy

- **Does it need a hub, and do I already have the right one?**
- **Is there a monthly fee** for phone alerts, or only for extras like professional monitoring?
- **Does it beep locally** as well as sending phone alerts?
- **Does it measure temperature** for freeze warnings?
- **Can more than one person get the alerts?** (Chapter 18)
- **Can it work with a shutoff valve** later, if I want one?

FROM BILL

One brand is easier than three

It's tempting to buy whatever's on sale, but three different apps means three sets of alerts to manage. Where you can, pick one system and stick with it. If you're not sure which suits your home, that's a perfect question for a quick call.

PART 3

Setting Up & Placing Your Sensors

What to gather, how setup goes in almost any app, exactly where each sensor should sit, and how to test that it really works.

CHAPTER 12

Before You Start: What You'll Need

A little preparation makes setup smooth. Gather these things before you open the box, and set aside about half an hour for your first sensor. The second one takes five minutes.

- **Your smartphone or tablet,** charged, with the sensor's app installed from the App Store or Google Play.
- **Your Wi-Fi name and password,** written down. Most sensors or hubs ask for it once.
- **An email address and password** for the app account. Write the password somewhere safe.
- **The hub or gateway,** if your sensors need one, and a free outlet near your router.
- **Batteries.** Most sensors include them; pull out the little plastic tab to activate them.
- **A paper towel and a small cup of water** for testing.
- **A flashlight** for looking behind the washer and under sinks.

TIP

Set up at the kitchen table

Pair each sensor to the app sitting comfortably near your router, then carry it to its spot. It's much easier than crouching behind a water heater with your phone in one hand.

GOOD TO KNOW

Turn on Bluetooth and location if asked

Many apps use Bluetooth to find a new device during setup and ask for location permission to scan for nearby gadgets. It's normal to allow these while setting up. You can review the permissions later in your phone's settings.

CHAPTER 13

Setting Up a Smart Sensor, Step by Step

Every brand's app looks a little different, but setup almost always follows the same pattern. Here it is in plain steps. Follow the on-screen directions in your app when they differ.

If your sensors use a hub or gateway

1. Plug in the hub or gateway near your router. Some connect with a network cable; others join Wi-Fi.
2. Open the app and create your account, or sign in.
3. Tap the **+** (plus) or **Add Device** button and choose the hub first. Many apps let you scan a QR code (a square barcode) printed on the hub or in the box.
4. Follow the prompts to connect the hub to your Wi-Fi if it asks.
5. Tap **+** again and add each sensor the same way — scan its code or press its setup button when the app tells you to.
6. Give each sensor a clear name, like **Water Heater** or **Kitchen Sink** (Chapter 15).
7. Make sure alerts are switched on for that sensor (Chapter 17), then test it (Chapter 16).

If your sensor connects directly

1. Open the app and sign in.
2. Tap **+** or **Add Device** and choose your sensor from the list, or scan its QR code.
3. Pull the battery tab or insert the batteries when the app says to. A light usually blinks to show it's ready to pair.
4. Choose your home Wi-Fi and type the password, if asked.
5. Name the sensor, turn on alerts, and test it.

Adding a Ring Flood & Freeze Sensor

In the Ring app, you add a sensor from the main menu's option to set up a device, then scan the QR code on the sensor. The newest model connects over Amazon Sidewalk with no base station. The original model pairs with your Ring Alarm Base Station, so keep it close to the base station while you set it up.

HEADS UP

If pairing fails

Move the sensor right next to the hub and try again. Check that your phone is on your home Wi-Fi (not cellular), that the batteries are in the right way, and — for Wi-Fi devices — that the 2.4 GHz band is turned on. Restarting the app often clears a stuck setup.

CHAPTER 14

Where to Put Each Sensor

Placement is where leak sensors succeed or fail. A sensor only notices water that actually reaches its contacts. The trick is to put it where water would *go*, not just near where it comes from. Water runs downhill and pools at the lowest spot.

Spot	Where exactly
Water heater	On the floor right beside the base of the tank, on the side where the floor slopes. If the heater sits in a drain pan, a sensor in the pan catches drips first.
Washing machine	On the floor behind or beside the washer, under the hose connections. Make sure it can't be crushed when the washer shakes.
Kitchen sink	On the floor of the cabinet, toward the back, below the pipes and the dishwasher connection.
Bathroom sinks	On the cabinet floor under the drain and supply lines.
Toilets	On the floor behind the toilet, near the supply valve on the wall.
Refrigerator	On the floor behind or beside the fridge, near where the ice maker line connects. Some people slide a flat sensor under the front.
Dishwasher	Under the kitchen sink near the dishwasher's water connection, or just inside the toe-kick panel if there's room.
Sump pit	Near the pit on the floor, or with a cable sensor looped around the outside edge (Chapter 22) — not inside the pit.
Basement floor	At the lowest point, near a floor drain, or along the wall where water has come in before.

TIP

The spilled-water test

Not sure where the low spot is? Pour a little water on the floor near the appliance and watch which way it runs. Put the sensor where it ends up. Wipe it up afterward.

Places to avoid

- Directly under a dripping air conditioner or dehumidifier line — unless that's what you want to watch.
- Where a mop or a pet's water bowl will set it off every day.
- Inside the sump pit itself, where it will always be wet.

- Outdoors or in a space that freezes, unless the sensor says it's rated for it. Ring's newest sensor, for example, lists an operating range of 32°F to 120°F.

CHAPTER 15

Naming Sensors So Alerts Make Sense

When an alert pops up at 2 a.m., the name of the sensor is all you'll see. "Sensor 3" means nothing. "Basement Water Heater" tells you exactly where to run. A few minutes spent on names pays off forever.

Good naming habits

- **Room first, then the thing:** "Basement Water Heater," "Kitchen Sink," "Upstairs Bath Toilet."
- **Use words a helper would understand.** If a neighbor gets the alert, "Laundry Room Washer" is clearer than "LR1."
- **Put a matching label on the sensor itself** with a piece of masking tape and a marker.
- **Group them by room** if your app offers rooms.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What good names do for you

A clear name turns a scary alert into a simple instruction: go to the laundry room. It also helps anyone you've shared alerts with, and it helps me if you call for help.

How to rename a sensor

1. Open the app and tap the sensor.
2. Look for the gear icon, **Settings** or **Device Details**.
3. Tap the name, type the new one, and tap **Save**.

CHAPTER 16

Testing Your Sensors (Do This Before You Trust Them)

A sensor you haven't tested is a sensor you're only hoping works. Testing takes a minute and shows you three things at once: the sensor notices water, the alarm sounds, and the alert reaches your phone — and anyone else who should get it.

The wet paper towel test

1. Dampen a paper towel. It should be wet, not dripping.
2. Set the sensor on the towel so the metal contacts on the bottom touch it. Ring notes that water has to touch **both** contacts for its sensor to trigger.
3. Listen for the local alarm, if your sensor has one.
4. Watch your phone. The alert should arrive within a short time. Note how long it took.
5. Ask anyone you've shared alerts with whether they got it too.
6. Dry the sensor completely with a towel and set it back in place.
7. In the app, dismiss or clear the alert so the sensor shows **dry** again.

HEADS UP

If the alert doesn't arrive

Check that notifications are allowed for the app in your phone's settings (Chapter 17), that the sensor shows **online** in the app, and that the hub has power. Chapter 35 walks through the full checklist for an offline sensor.

Testing a sensor-to-valve setup

If a sensor is paired with an automatic shutoff valve, test that too. Wet the sensor and listen for the valve to close, then open a faucet to confirm the water has stopped. Afterward, open the valve again from the app or by hand. If you're uneasy doing this the first time, it's a good thing to do together with your plumber or with me.

FROM BILL

Test before you leave

Before a trip, I always suggest a quick test of every sensor. It's part of my Leak Sensor Setup visit for exactly that reason: a sensor that's been quietly offline for a month is no protection at all.

PART 4

Alerts That Someone Actually Answers

An alarm only helps if a person responds. How to make alerts loud and clear, share them with family and neighbors, plan who does what, and use freeze warnings in an Ohio winter.

CHAPTER 17

Turning On the Right Alerts

Your phone is the messenger. If it's set to stay quiet, a leak alert can sit unseen on the lock screen. Here's how to make sure the important ones get through.

Allow notifications for the app

1. **iPhone:** open **Settings**, tap **Notifications**, find your sensor app and make sure **Allow Notifications** is on, with sounds turned on.
2. **Android:** open **Settings**, tap **Notifications** (on some phones, **Apps** > your app > **Notifications**), and make sure the app's notifications are on.
3. Back in the sensor app, open the sensor's settings and check that water alerts — and freeze alerts, if it has them — are switched on.

Let urgent alerts through quiet hours

Many people use a bedtime setting — **Focus** or **Do Not Disturb** on iPhone, **Do Not Disturb** on Android — that silences the phone overnight. Both let you choose apps that are allowed to break through. Add your leak sensor app to that list. Some sensor apps also offer an extra-urgent alert option that can sound even when the phone is silenced; if yours asks for permission to send those, it's worth saying yes.

> **TIP**
>
> **Use a sound you'll notice**
>
> If your app lets you choose an alert sound, pick something distinct from your text-message sound. You'll learn that "that's the water alarm" sound quickly.

More than one way to reach you

Some systems offer several kinds of alert. Moen's Flo shutoff can alert you through its app, by text, by email or with a phone call; Phyn sends app or text alerts; Govee lists app and email alerts. Turning on a second method, like a text or call, is a good backup for an urgent alert.

CHAPTER 18

Sharing Alerts with Family and Neighbors

The best leak alert goes to more than one person. If you're at the doctor, on a plane or simply asleep, someone else can respond. Most sensor apps let you invite family members or a trusted neighbor to see your devices and get alerts on their own phones.

How sharing usually works

1. In the app, look for **Share**, **Members**, **Family**, **Users** or **Shared Access** — often in the main menu or the home's settings.
2. Enter the other person's email address or phone number and send the invitation.
3. They install the same app on their phone, create a free account and accept the invitation.
4. Have them check that alerts are allowed on *their* phone (Chapter 17).
5. Do a wet paper towel test together (Chapter 16) and confirm they got the alert.

GOOD TO KNOW

Shared users can usually see, not change everything

In many apps, a shared user can see devices and receive alerts but can't delete devices or change the account. That's usually what you want for a neighbor. Check what your app allows.

If the app has no sharing

Some simple systems only notify the account owner. In that case, ask a family member to install the app and sign in with the same account on their phone, or choose a system that offers text, email or call alerts you can add another person to. A grown child several states away can still be the one who calls the neighbor.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What sharing does for you

You don't have to be the only one watching. When the alert also goes to your son in Akron or the neighbor across the street, the chance that somebody responds quickly goes way up.

CHAPTER 19

Make a Simple Water Emergency Plan

A plan is just an answer, decided ahead of time, to one question: **if the water alarm goes off and I'm not home, who goes and what do they do?** Writing it down takes ten minutes and saves a lot of panic.

Decide these things

- **Who responds.** A first choice and a backup — a neighbor, a family member nearby, a friend.
- **How they get in.** A spare key, a lockbox, a garage code or a smart lock code.
- **Where the main water valve is,** and how to turn it (Chapter 4). Show them in person.
- **Where the electrical panel is,** in case power to a wet area should be turned off by someone who knows how — or so they can tell an electrician.
- **Who to call next:** your plumber, your insurance company's claim line, and your water-damage cleanup company if you have one in mind.

STAY SAFE

Water and electricity don't mix

Never step into standing water in a basement if there's any chance it's touching outlets, extension cords, appliances or the electrical panel. Stay out, and call the electric utility or an electrician. A leak is a mess; a shock can be deadly.

Put it where people will find it

Write the plan on one sheet, tape a copy near the main valve and another inside a kitchen cabinet, and send a photo of it to the people on the list. The fill-in table in Chapter 38 is a good starting point.

CHAPTER 20

Freeze Alerts for Northeast Ohio Winters

Many leak sensors also measure the temperature around them. That turns them into an early warning for the problem Ohio homes dread most in January: frozen pipes. If the heat quits while you're away, a freeze alert gives you time to act before a pipe splits.

Which sensors offer freeze alerts

- Ring's original Flood & Freeze Sensor alerts when the temperature drops below 40°F.
- Moen's Flo shutoff and Phyn's smart valve both send freeze warnings from the main water line.
- Many Wi-Fi and hub-based sensors (Govee, YoLink and others) offer temperature readings or a separate temperature sensor. Check your model's description in the app.

Where freeze sensors do the most good

- Near pipes on **outside walls**, especially under a kitchen sink on an exterior wall.
- In a **crawl space**, unheated **garage** or **enclosed porch** with water lines.
- Near the **main water line** where it enters the basement.
- In a **second home or a house you're watching** for someone who's away for the winter.

Simple steps that help pipes

The American Red Cross suggests keeping the thermostat at the same temperature day and night during very cold weather, letting a faucet drip a little where pipes are exposed, opening kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors so warm air reaches the pipes, and keeping garage doors closed if water lines run through the garage. Never shut the heat off in winter, even when you travel.

HEADS UP

When a freeze alert arrives

Check that the furnace is running and the thermostat is set normally. Open cabinet doors on outside walls. If you're away, send your responder to check. If a pipe has already frozen, don't use an open flame to thaw it — call a plumber, and know where your main valve is in case it splits as it thaws.

TIP

Pair it with a smart thermostat

A smart thermostat can warn you if the house itself is getting cold. Bill's Smart Thermostats manual explains those alerts. Together, they make a good winter safety net.

PART 5

Sump Pumps & Basements

How a sump pump keeps a basement dry, why it fails at the worst moment, and the alarms and battery backups that warn you — or keep pumping — when it does.

CHAPTER 21

How a Sump Pump Works (and Why It Fails)

Many Portage County basements have a **sump pit**: a hole in the basement floor, usually covered with a lid, where groundwater collects. Inside sits a **sump pump**. When the water rises, a **float switch** — a little floating arm or ball — lifts and turns the pump on. The pump pushes the water up a pipe and outside, away from the house.

Why sump pumps fail

Cause	What happens
Power outage	The most common problem. Storms that bring heavy rain also knock out power, and a regular sump pump stops when the power does.
Stuck float switch	The float can catch on the side of the pit or on the pump's cord and never turn the pump on.
Worn-out pump	Pumps don't last forever. An older pump may run but not keep up.
Clogged or frozen discharge pipe	If the outside pipe is blocked by debris or ice, the water has nowhere to go.
Too much water	In a very heavy storm, even a working pump can be overwhelmed.
Tripped outlet or breaker	If the pump's outlet or circuit trips, the pump quietly stops.

TIP

Listen and look now and then

During a heavy rain, peek at the sump pit. You should see the water rise, the pump kick on, and the water drop. If the water keeps climbing and the pump is silent, that's your signal to act — or to call a plumber.

STAY SAFE

Leave the pump itself to a plumber

A sump pump sits in water and runs on household electricity. Lifting it out, replacing the float or rewiring it is a plumber's job. You can safely add an alarm and test your system as described in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 22

Sump Pump High-Water Alarms

A **high-water alarm** warns you when the water in the sump pit rises above where it should — the sign that the pump has stopped or can't keep up. It's one of the least expensive and most useful gadgets in this whole guide.

Three kinds

Kind	What it does
Simple audible alarm	A small box that plugs in or runs on a battery, with a sensor that hangs into the pit just above the pump's normal "on" level. It beeps loudly if the water reaches it.
Smart sump monitor	Does the same but also sends an alert to your phone. Some also report whether the pump has power.
Built into a backup system	Many battery backup pump systems (Chapter 23) include an alarm, and some offer a Wi-Fi add-on that sends texts or emails.

Ring's Sump Pump Monitor

One example of a smart monitor is Ring's **Sump Pump Monitor**, part of the Ring Sensors line. In November 2026 Ring listed it at $49.99. Like Ring's newest Flood & Freeze Sensor, it connects over Amazon Sidewalk with no base station, runs on two AA batteries (Ring says up to five years), and alerts you in the Ring app. It comes with a five-foot sensor cable.

HEADS UP

Where the cable goes

Ring says to lay the detection cord in a loop around the **outside edge** of the sump pit, not inside it. The cord alerts on any water contact, so putting it in the pit will cause constant false alarms. Other brands may work differently — some sensors are meant to hang inside the pit at a set height. Follow the directions for yours.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What a sump alarm does for you

During a spring storm or a power outage, a sump alarm is the difference between "the pump stopped an hour ago" and "the basement has been filling all night." An hour's notice is enough to call for help, move things off the floor, or get a backup running.

CHAPTER 23

Battery Backup Pumps and Power Outages

Because sump pumps so often fail during power outages, many homeowners add a **battery backup sump pump**. It's a second pump in the same pit, connected to a large rechargeable battery. If the main pump stops or the water rises too high, the backup takes over.

What to know about backups

- **They're a plumbing job.** A backup pump needs its own pipe connection and check valve. Have a plumber install it.
- **They run for a limited time.** How long depends on the battery and how hard the pump works. Ask your plumber what to expect for your home.
- **The battery wears out.** Most backup systems have a battery that needs replacing every few years. Many sound an alarm when it's weak.
- **Some offer phone alerts.** For example, Basement Watchdog sells a Wi-Fi module for some of its backup systems that sends texts or emails about the system's status.
- **Water-powered backups exist too.** Some homes on city water use a backup pump that runs on water pressure instead of a battery. A plumber can tell you if one suits your home.

HEADS UP

Your internet needs power too

Phone alerts from a sump monitor or leak sensor only get out if your router and modem have power. Basement Watchdog's own instructions recommend a battery backup for the router and modem. A small battery backup box (called a **UPS**, for uninterruptible power supply) under the desk can keep your internet running for a while during an outage. Ring's Sidewalk-based sensors are designed to stay connected through nearby Sidewalk devices even if your own Wi-Fi drops.

TIP

A generator is a bigger step

Some homes in our area have a standby generator that powers the sump pump during outages. That's a job for an electrician, but if you have one, your sump pump and router may already be covered.

CHAPTER 24

Your Basement Water Checklist

Once a season — and before you travel — walk through the basement with this list. It takes ten minutes and catches most problems early.

1. Lift the sump pit lid and look. Is the float free to move? Is the pit clear of debris?
2. Test the pump the way your plumber or the pump's instructions suggest — many people slowly pour a bucket of water into the pit and watch the pump turn on and empty it.
3. Check that the high-water alarm and backup pump show normal status, and that any battery is charged.
4. Look at the water heater base, the washer hoses and the floor for any dampness or rust stains.
5. Check every leak sensor in the app: online, battery good, no old alerts.
6. Outside, make sure the sump discharge pipe is clear and points away from the house. Clean the gutters and make sure downspouts carry water away from the foundation.
7. Keep valuables, photos and paperwork off the basement floor — on shelves or in plastic bins.

GOOD TO KNOW

Washer hoses are worth a look

Many washers come with plain rubber fill hoses. Check them for bulges, cracks or brittleness, and consider replacing old ones with braided stainless-steel hoses. A plumber or appliance store can help you choose. Turning off the washer's two water valves when you leave for a long trip is another simple safeguard.

PART 6

Automatic Water Shutoff

Smart valves that watch the water flowing into the whole house and can stop it by themselves — how they work, the main brands, honest costs, and why installation is a plumber's job.

CHAPTER 25

How Whole-Home Shutoff Works

A leak sensor tells you about water. An **automatic shutoff valve** can actually stop it. It's installed on, or attached to, the **main water line** — the pipe that brings water into your house — and it can close that line when something goes wrong, whether you're home or not.

Two main approaches

Type	How it works
In-line smart valve	A device a plumber installs right into the main water pipe by cutting out a short section. It measures the water flowing through and can shut it off. Moen Flo and Phyn are examples.
Clamp-on valve controller	A motor that fits over your existing lever-style shutoff valve and turns it for you. No pipe cutting, but your valve must be the right kind and in good shape. YoLink sells one.

What makes it close

- **Unusual flow.** In-line valves learn your home's normal water use and can shut off when water runs far longer or faster than normal — like a burst hose.
- **A leak sensor.** Many systems let floor sensors tell the valve to close when they get wet.
- **You.** Most let you close the valve from the app, from anywhere.
- **A schedule or away mode,** on some systems, so it's stricter while you travel.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A sensor alert still needs someone to come and turn off the water. An automatic valve doesn't wait. For a home that's empty for weeks in the winter, or for someone who can't easily get to the basement, that can make all the difference.

GOOD TO KNOW

It won't stop every kind of water

A shutoff valve on the main line stops water coming *through your pipes*. It can't stop groundwater coming up through the sump pit, rain through the roof, or water backing up from a sewer drain. That's why sump alarms and floor sensors still matter.

CHAPTER 26

Moen Flo Shutoff

Moen, the faucet company, makes the **Moen Flo Shutoff** (you may also see it called the Flo Smart Water Monitor & Shutoff). It's an in-line smart valve installed on your main cold water line. It watches flow, pressure and temperature, and can turn your water off automatically.

What it does

- **Automatic shutoff.** Moen's FloSense technology learns your home's water use and shuts off the water when it sees signs of a leak.
- **Daily MicroLeak tests** that Moen says can catch leaks as small as a drop per minute.
- **Alerts by app, text, email or phone call** for leaks, unusual use and freezing conditions.
- **Remote on and off** from the free Moen app (Moen's pages call it the Moen Smart Water app). Moen says the app itself has no fees or subscription.
- **Works with** Moen Flo Detectors (floor leak sensors), Amazon Alexa, Ring and Alarm.com.

What it needs

- Installation on the main cold water line, after the water meter, the main shutoff and any pressure-reducing valve.
- A **2.4 GHz Wi-Fi** signal where it's installed.
- An **electrical outlet within about 10 feet**. Moen sells a 25-foot extension cable, and a battery backup accessory is offered in some bundles.
- The right size for your pipe. Moen's sizing guide helps you check.

Honest costs

In November 2026, Moen's own store showed a one-time price of $719.64 for the shutoff kit, with retailer prices and sales varying. Installation by a plumber is extra. Moen also offers a **Moen Flo Protection Service** subscription — listed at $17.99 a month with a $49.99 activation fee and a 36-month commitment — that includes the device, a continuing warranty, up to $5,000 toward an insurance deductible if the device fails to work as designed, and a yearly plumbing repair allowance. Canceling early carries a fee of half the remaining payments. Bundles may include a three-year **FloProtect** plan instead.

HEADS UP

Read the subscription terms before signing

A 36-month commitment with an early-cancellation fee is a real decision. Buying the device outright with no subscription is also an option, and Moen says the app works without fees. Compare both against what you actually need — I'm happy to look at it with you.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the Wi-Fi drops

Moen says the Flo Shutoff keeps protecting your home using what it has already learned if it loses its Wi-Fi connection. You just can't get alerts or control it remotely until Wi-Fi comes back.

CHAPTER 27

Phyn Protect (Formerly Phyn Plus)

Phyn makes an in-line smart water valve that was sold for years as **Phyn Plus**. Phyn has since renamed it **Phyn Protect**; Phyn says it's the same whole-home monitoring and leak protection with a new name and look. If you already own a Phyn Plus, nothing changes for you.

What it does

- **Listens to your plumbing.** Phyn uses high-definition pressure-wave analysis to tell normal use from a leak.
- **Automatic shutoff** after a learning period, plus remote shutoff from the free Phyn app.
- **Plumbing Check**: with the water off at the main, the app can test your pipes for hidden problems like pinhole leaks in a few minutes.
- **Pre-freeze warnings** before freezing conditions set in.
- **Leak alerts** by push notification or text, and water-use tracking by day and month.
- **Works with** Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, and can watch up to six properties in one account.

What it needs and what it costs

- A main water line **1¼ inches or smaller**, in a single-family home or townhome that's plumbed individually. Homes on wells are fine.
- Wi-Fi at the install spot, and an outlet within 12 feet (Phyn recommends a GFCI outlet).
- A licensed plumber: Phyn recommends professional installation because the main line is cut. It usually takes one to two hours. Adapters may be needed and aren't included.
- In November 2026 Phyn's store listed Phyn Protect at a sale price of $579.99, plus installation.

GOOD TO KNOW

During a power outage

Phyn says its valve stays in whatever position it was in when the power went out — it won't shut your water off by itself without power. A manual shutoff tool on the mounting bracket lets you turn the water on or off by hand.

CHAPTER 28

Clamp-On Valve Controllers (Like YoLink's)

If you'd rather not cut into the main line, a **valve controller** may be an option. It's a small motor unit that straps onto your existing lever-style shutoff valve. When it gets the signal, it turns the lever a quarter turn to shut the water off, just as you would by hand.

How YoLink's works

- YoLink's valve controller fits over a quarter-turn ball valve and is run from the YoLink app through a YoLink hub.
- YoLink leak sensors can be paired directly with the valve controller, so a wet sensor can close the valve on its own — YoLink says this works even without an internet connection.
- YoLink also sells complete kits with a motorized valve, for homes whose existing valve isn't suitable.

HEADS UP

Your valve has to be right for it

Clamp-on controllers need a lever-style ball valve that turns smoothly. An old round-wheel valve or a stiff, corroded lever won't work, and forcing it can damage the valve. If yours isn't suitable, a plumber can replace it with a new ball valve — often a modest job — and then the controller can go on.

TIP

A middle path on cost

A clamp-on controller with a hub and a few sensors usually costs less than an in-line smart valve plus plumber. It doesn't measure flow, so it relies on the floor sensors to notice a leak — place them carefully (Chapter 14).

CHAPTER 29

Installation: Why the Main Line Is a Plumber's Job

This one's simple: **installing a valve on your main water line is a job for a licensed plumber.** Moen and Phyn both recommend professional installation, and for good reason.

Why it matters

- **The pipe gets cut.** In-line valves require removing a section of your main water pipe. A mistake can mean a flood of its own.
- **Fittings and sizes vary.** Copper, PEX, galvanized steel, different diameters — each needs the right adapters.
- **Placement rules.** The valve has to go after the meter and main shutoff, before the line branches, and in a spot with Wi-Fi and power.
- **Codes and permits** may apply in your town. A local plumber knows.
- **Warranty.** Manufacturers expect professional installation and give instructions for the plumber to follow.

Who does what

Who	What
Your plumber	Installs the valve on the main line, and any backup sump pump or new ball valve.
Bill	Helps you choose, sets up the app and Wi-Fi, connects and places the leak sensors, sets up alerts and sharing, and tests everything with you.
You	Decide who responds to alerts, learn where the main valve is, and keep batteries fresh.

SCAM ALERT

Be wary of door-to-door water offers

A stranger who knocks and says your water is unsafe, your pipes are about to fail, or your insurer "requires" a device today is a red flag. Don't let anyone in to "test" your water or sign a contract on the spot. Find your own licensed plumber, get a written quote, and call me if you'd like a second opinion.

CHAPTER 30

Insurance Discounts: What to Ask

Some homeowners insurance companies offer discounts or other perks for leak sensors or automatic shutoff valves. Moen says insurance discounts may be available through participating providers depending on your location and insurer, and both Moen and Phyn have programs for insurance partners. But programs vary widely and change often, so **never assume you'll get a discount** — ask first.

Questions to ask your insurance agent

- Do you offer a discount for leak sensors, a sump alarm or an automatic water shutoff valve?
- Does it have to be a specific brand, or professionally monitored?
- Do you need proof — a receipt, a photo or a plumber's invoice?
- Does a device change my water damage coverage or deductible in any way?
- Is sump pump backup or water backup coverage part of my policy, or an add-on?

HEADS UP

Check your water backup coverage

Many standard policies don't automatically cover water that backs up through a sump pump or drain. It's often a separate add-on. Ask your agent — it's worth knowing before a storm, not after.

SCAM ALERT

Your insurer won't cold-call to sell you a gadget

If someone calls claiming to be from your insurance company and says you must buy a device today or lose coverage, hang up and call the number on your policy or insurance card. Real insurers don't pressure you over the phone.

PART 7

When an Alarm Goes Off

Calm, simple steps for the first few minutes, what to do once the water stops, and how to deal with false alarms and alerts that won't clear.

CHAPTER 31

The First Five Minutes

When a leak alarm sounds, take a breath. Most alerts turn out to be a small drip or a splash. Here's the order to work through, whether you're home or sending a helper.

1. **Read the alert.** Which sensor is it? The name tells you where to go.
2. **Go look — safely.** If there's standing water near outlets, cords or the electrical panel, stay out of the water and call an electrician or the electric company.
3. **Find the source.** Is it dripping from a pipe, the water heater, the washer hose, the toilet? Or coming in from outside or the sump pit?
4. **Stop the water.** For a single fixture, close its small shutoff valve (under the sink, behind the toilet, behind the washer). For anything bigger, or if you're not sure, turn off the **main water valve** (Chapter 4). If you have a smart shutoff, you can close it from the app.
5. **Water heater leaking?** After turning off the water, turn the heater's gas control to **Off** or **Pilot**, or switch off its breaker for an electric heater, if you know how. If you smell gas, leave the house and call the gas company from outside.
6. **Call for help.** A plumber for a broken pipe or appliance; a water-damage cleanup company if there's a lot of water.
7. **Let your helpers know** it's handled, so nobody else rushes over.

STAY SAFE

Your safety comes first

Don't climb ladders, lift heavy wet things or wade into a flooded basement alone. Water damage can be repaired. Call someone and wait if you need to.

TIP

If you're away

Call your first responder, tell them which sensor went off, and stay on the phone while they look. If you have a smart valve, close it from the app first — that buys time.

CHAPTER 32

After the Water Stops

Once the water is off and everyone is safe, a few steps protect your home and make any insurance claim go smoothly.

Right away

- **Take photos and video** of the water, the source and anything damaged, before you clean up.
- **Move belongings** out of the wet area and onto dry ground or shelves.
- **Soak up and dry out.** Towels, a wet-dry vacuum, fans and a dehumidifier help. Open windows if the weather allows.
- **Call your insurance company** if the damage is more than a small spill. Ask what they need and whether they want you to wait for an adjuster before throwing anything away.

Within a day or two

- Wet carpet pad, drywall and insulation often need to come out to dry properly. A water-damage cleanup company can measure moisture inside walls and floors.
- Have a plumber repair the cause before turning the water back on to that fixture.
- Dry and test the sensor that caught it (Chapter 16), and clear the alert in the app.

GOOD TO KNOW

Keep a simple record

Write down the date, time, which sensor alerted, what you found and who you called. Save receipts for cleanup supplies and repairs. Your insurance company may ask for these.

SCAM ALERT

Watch out for storm chasers

After a big storm, some "contractors" knock on doors offering fast basement cleanups and asking for payment up front or for you to sign over your insurance claim. Use a company you choose, check reviews and licenses, and never pay the full amount before the work is done.

CHAPTER 33

False Alarms and Alerts That Won't Clear

Now and then a sensor will go off when there's no leak, or keep saying "wet" after you've dried it. These are almost always easy fixes.

Common false alarm causes

- **Mopping or spills** near the sensor. Pick the sensor up before you mop.
- **Condensation.** A sweating cold-water pipe, a dehumidifier or an air conditioner drain can drip right onto a sensor. Move it a little, or deal with the drip.
- **Metal touching the contacts.** Ring notes that anything conductive touching the bottom of its sensor can keep it reading wet.
- **Pets** splashing from a water bowl.

If it stays "wet" after you've dried it

1. Dry the bottom of the sensor completely, including between the contacts.
2. Set it on a dry surface away from anything metal.
3. In the app, dismiss or clear the alert. In the Ring app, for example, tap **Take Action** on the "Water Detected" message to dismiss it.
4. Wait a few minutes. If it still says wet, remove and reinsert the batteries.

Freeze alert that won't clear

Ring's original sensor alerts below 40°F and won't clear until the spot warms above 45°F. Other brands work similarly. If a sensor sits on a cold concrete floor near an outside wall, it may read a few degrees colder than the room. That can be a useful warning — or you may want to move it a little.

TIP

Snooze instead of silencing

If you're cleaning up and the alerts keep coming, many apps let you **snooze** one sensor for a few hours instead of turning alerts off. In the Ring app you can snooze a Flood & Freeze alert for 4, 8, 12 or 24 hours. That way you won't forget to turn them back on.

PART 8

Care, Fixes & When to Call Bill

Keeping sensors healthy for years, getting an offline sensor back, scams to watch for, knowing when a call will save you an afternoon, and a one-page cheat-sheet.

CHAPTER 34

Batteries and Yearly Upkeep

Leak sensors ask very little, but they need a few minutes of attention a couple of times a year. A sensor with a dead battery is just a plastic puck on the floor.

A twice-a-year routine

1. Open the app and check every sensor: online, battery level, no leftover alerts.
2. Do the wet paper towel test on each sensor (Chapter 16).
3. Replace any battery the app says is low. Use the type printed on the sensor or in the app.
4. Test simple battery alarms with their test button.
5. Check that shared users are still the right people and still get alerts.
6. Make sure the hub or gateway is plugged in and its light looks normal.
7. Let the app and devices install updates when offered.

TIP

Tie it to the clock change

Spring forward and fall back are easy reminders. When you change the clocks and check your smoke alarms, check your leak sensors too.

Battery types you'll meet

Type	Where you'll find it
AA or AAA	Common in many sensors, including Ring's newest Flood & Freeze Sensor (two AAs).
CR123A	A short, thick lithium battery used in Ring's original Flood & Freeze Sensor and many alarm-system sensors.
Coin cell (CR2032 and similar)	Small, flat batteries used in some compact sensors.

HEADS UP

Match the + and - marks

When you change a battery, line up the + and - marks with the ones in the battery bay. Ring notes that its original sensor reconnects to the base station by itself after a battery change.

CHAPTER 35

When a Sensor Goes Offline

"Offline" means the app can't hear from the sensor. The sensor may still beep if it gets wet, but it can't reach your phone. It's almost never a broken sensor. Work through this list in order.

1. **Check the batteries.** A dead or weak battery is the most common cause. Replace them.
2. **Check the hub or gateway.** Is it plugged in, with its usual lights? If not, plug it back in and give it a few minutes.
3. **Check your internet.** If other devices can't get online, restart the router and modem: unplug them for 30 seconds, plug them back in, and wait a few minutes.
4. **Check the distance.** Bring the sensor close to the hub. If it comes back online, the original spot is too far. Ring suggests moving the sensor within five feet of the base station to test, then moving the base station or adding a range extender.
5. **Restart the app,** or sign out and back in.
6. **Reset and re-add the sensor** as a last resort, following the app's instructions. For Ring's original sensor, you remove the cover and hold the setup button for 10 seconds until the light turns solid red.

GOOD TO KNOW

For Ring's newest sensors

Sensors on Amazon Sidewalk depend on Sidewalk coverage in your area. If one goes offline, check Ring's coverage map and consider adding a compatible Echo speaker or Ring device that acts as a Sidewalk gateway.

TIP

Always the same sensor? It's usually distance

If one sensor keeps dropping off while the others are fine, it's almost always too far from the hub or Wi-Fi. A range extender, a better hub location or a long-range sensor usually solves it for good.

CHAPTER 36

Water-Related Scams to Watch For

Water damage is scary, and scammers know it. Most of these tricks rely on fear and hurry. A little knowledge takes away their power.

Scam	What it looks like
Fake water testing	Someone knocks or calls offering a free test, then says your water is dangerous and you need an expensive filter system today.
Utility impostors	A caller claims to be from the water company and says your service will be shut off unless you pay right now, often by gift card or wire.
Storm chasers	After a flood, a crew offers instant cleanup but wants cash up front or asks you to sign over your insurance check.
Insurance pressure	A caller says your insurer requires a device installed this week or you'll lose coverage.
Fake tech support	A pop-up or caller says your smart home has been hacked and asks for remote access to your computer or phone.

SCAM ALERT

The three-question check

Is someone rushing me? Are they asking for money or access before I've checked them out? Did *they* contact *me*? If the answer to any of those is yes, stop. Hang up, close the door, and call the company back using a number you look up yourself — on your bill, policy or the company's real website.

FROM BILL

Call me first

I'd much rather take a two-minute "is this real?" call than help undo a scam later. That's always a good use of my phone line.

CHAPTER 37

When to Call Bill

This guide is meant to make you confident with leak protection, and most of the time it will. But you should never feel you have to wrestle alone with something frustrating. Calling for help is a smart move, not a failure.

Good reasons to call

- You'd like sensors set up and placed properly, with alerts on your phone and a family member's.
- A sensor or hub won't connect, or keeps going offline.
- You're choosing between brands and want an honest opinion about what suits your home.
- You have a smart shutoff valve installed by a plumber and need the app, Wi-Fi and sensors set up.
- You're leaving for the winter and want everything tested before you go.
- Anyone is pressuring or frightening you about your water, your pipes or your smart home.

My Leak Sensor Setup service

This is exactly what my **Leak Sensor Setup** service is for. I'll help you place sensors under the sinks and by the water heater, washer and dishwasher, set up the phone alerts, share them with the people you choose, and do a live test with you before you leave town. I don't do plumbing — for the main line or a sump pump I'll point you to a licensed plumber — but I'll handle the tech side from start to finish. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**.

SCAM ALERT

Real help never cold-calls or demands remote access

No legitimate leak sensor company, plumber or insurer will call out of the blue, say your home is at risk, demand payment, or insist on remote access to your computer or phone. Those are scams. If anyone pressures you like that, hang up and call me at **(330) 200-8042**.

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and I help folks right here in **Portage County, Ohio**. Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book online at **billshometech.com/book**. If you call the main line and reach my assistant **Sophie**, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. With 30+ years of professional experience, there's very little about a home tech setup I haven't seen, and no

question is too small. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**; this guide is yours to keep at no charge.

— Bill

CHAPTER 38

Your Leak-Protection Cheat-Sheet

Print this page and keep it handy — near the main water valve is a good spot. It's the whole guide boiled down to the moves you'll reach for most.

Everyday moves

I want to…	Do this
Stop all the water	Main valve: lever crosswise to the pipe, or wheel clockwise (Chapter 4).
Stop one fixture	Close the small valve under the sink, behind the toilet or behind the washer.
Test a sensor	Set it on a damp paper towel; check the beep and the phone alert (Chapter 16).
Share alerts	In the app, look for Share, Members or Users and invite them (Chapter 18).
Let alerts through at night	Add the app to Focus or Do Not Disturb exceptions (Chapter 17).
Clear a stuck alert	Dry the sensor, keep it off metal, dismiss the alert (Chapter 33).
Fix an offline sensor	Batteries, hub power, internet, distance (Chapter 35).
Freeze alert	Check the furnace and thermostat; open cabinets; send a helper (Chapter 20).

If an alarm goes off

1. Read which sensor it is.
2. Look safely — stay out of water near electricity.
3. Stop the water: the fixture valve, or the main valve.
4. Call a plumber, then your insurer if the damage is more than a spill.

Write these down

What	Write it here
Main water valve location	_____
Sensor app name and account email	_____
First responder (name and phone)	_____

What	Write it here
Backup responder (name and phone)	_____
Where the spare key is	_____
My plumber	_____
Insurance claim phone number	_____
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book