

Your guide to power outages

How to prepare and be safe



Creating a safer state
with electricity and gas



Why we have power outages

Victoria has traditionally had the most reliable power supply in Australia, but sometimes power outages do occur.

Power outages can be caused by severe weather, such as lightning, floods, heatwaves, bushfires or high winds, or by trees contacting powerlines. Animals, car accidents or digging near underground powerlines can also cause interruptions to power.

Restoring power is usually the responsibility of your local electricity distribution company, who own and maintain the poles and wires bringing power to your home.

This guide outlines some simple things you can do at home to help prevent power outages – and to prepare for those rare occasions when power is lost for a long time.

Help prevent power outages

Trees interfering with powerlines are a cause of many easily preventable power outages.

You can help to reduce this risk by regularly checking the size and health of trees growing close to powerlines, and letting the appropriate people know if these trees need to be cut back or removed.

DO NOT attempt to remove or prune trees near powerlines yourself, even if they are on your property.

If the tree is on your property, contact a qualified tree clearing professional. If the tree is in the street, call your local council or electricity distributor. These groups can arrange for the trees to be pruned or removed according to safety regulations.

For more information on tree clearing, visit ESV's website at www.esv.vic.gov.au or call **1800 800 158**.

Preparing to manage a **power outage**

Power outages can occur at any time. To prepare, you should have an energy plan and kit, which includes the following:

1. **Important contacts.** Complete the list provided in this brochure and keep these numbers somewhere easy to find.
2. **Access to a phone.** For instance, a charged mobile phone that doesn't rely on electricity to operate.
3. **Alternative lighting.** For instance, candles or torches. Remember to keep naked flames away from flammable material and gas sources.
4. **Alternative cooking facilities and heating.** Keep in mind that some gas appliances may still require electricity to operate them.

Always ensure gas connections on portable appliances are maintained and in good working order. Never bring outdoor gas appliances such as BBQs and patio heaters indoors.

5. **A battery-powered radio.** Stay tuned to news services to get updates on weather conditions and power outages.
6. **Access to fresh water.** If you use electricity to run a water pump, make sure you have an alternative source for fresh water.

What if you have special needs?

If you require an uninterrupted supply of power because you:

- are on life support equipment,
- have a medical condition that requires continuous power supply, or
- have any other special needs,

you should report your needs to your electricity retailer (the company you pay for your electricity) and make sure they have your up-to-date contact details.

Power outages

Important contacts

Record all the contact telephone numbers you need during a power outage in the list below and keep this somewhere safe and accessible.

Contact	When	Telephone number
Faults and Emergencies number on your electricity bill (your local electricity distributor)	To report a power outage	Record your number and web address here
Your local council	For information on emergency services available in your area, particularly if you are elderly, disabled or need special help	Record your number and web address here
Your electricity retail company	To report special needs if you require uninterrupted power. Make sure they have your up-to-date contact details	Record your number and web address here
State Emergency Services (SES)	For storm and flood emergency assistance	132 500 www.ses.vic.gov.au
Emergency Services	For life threatening emergencies	000 www.triplezero.gov.au
Department of Health and Human Services	Food safety information for consumers	1300 364 352 www2.health.vic.gov.au

What to do when you lose power

Be energy safe

- Keep clear of fallen powerlines and keep others away. The powerlines may still be live. Call your local electricity distributor (see the faults and emergencies number on your most recent electricity bill).
- Check your neighbour's house to see if they have also lost power. If your neighbour has power check to see if your safety switch has been tripped.
- Be careful when using candles and other open flames – keep naked flames away from flammable material.
- Turn off your electrical appliances and light switches – they may turn back on when you are not there.
- Don't try to connect temporary generators to household wiring. Engage a licensed electrician to do all electrical work. 'Do-It-Yourself' electrical work is very dangerous and illegal.
- If the power has been cut due to storm damage to your house, get a licensed electrician to ensure it is safe before any repairs are carried out.

Be safe with food

- Try to keep cold and frozen food cold. Move food from the fridge to the freezer. If food is still cold to touch, less than 5°C, it is safe to use.
- Once cold or frozen food is no longer cold to touch, 5°C or above, it can be kept and eaten for up to four hours and then it must be thrown away. If it is raw meat, it should be cooked and eaten.
- Eat hot food within four hours or throw it away.
- If power is restored when frozen food is still solid, the food is safe to refreeze.
- If a power failure lasts more than one hour, place bagged ice under food packages and trays stored in freezers and fridges.
- Place an insulating blanket over cold or frozen food where possible.
- Only open fridge and freezer doors when absolutely necessary. This will keep the food and air temperature colder for longer.

For more information on food safety visit www.health.vic.gov.au/food-safety/food-safety-during-power-outages or call the Department of Health a on **1300 364 352**.

Be a good neighbour

- Check and offer support to neighbours and relatives, particularly those with special needs, such as elderly people and people with disabilities.

Who can help restore power

Your electricity distribution company

Your electricity distribution company is responsible for the poles and wires which carry electricity to your home, and normally organise for the power to be restored. They can be contacted on the faults and emergencies number on your most recent electricity bill.

State Emergency Services (SES)

For storm and flood emergency assistance contact the SES on **132 500** or check their website for any updates **www.ses.vic.gov.au**. They can note the details and send help if necessary.

Life threatening emergencies should be reported to **000**.

Your local council

Contact your local council if you need information on emergency services available in your area, particularly if you are elderly, disabled or need special help.

Restoring power supply

If the power outage is caused by a fault with the poles and wires, your electricity distribution company will work to restore power as quickly as possible.

How long this may take can depend on factors such as how widespread the damage is, the severity of the damage, weather conditions and access to the area.

Customers who experience long or frequent power outages in a year may be eligible for Guaranteed Service Level payments.

To find out about your eligibility, contact your local electricity distribution company, visit the Australian Energy Regulator at **www.aer.gov.au** or call **1300 585 165**, or **www.energy.vic.gov.au** and search for customer compensation. You may also be eligible for other personal hardship emergency assistance. To find out contact the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing on **1 300 650 172** or visit its website at **services.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergencies**.



For further information go to
www.esv.vic.gov.au or phone
ESV on **(03) 9203 9700**.



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