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Planned and unplanned energy and water supply outages

Information about energy and water supply outages and associated issues.

Unplanned energy and water outages

Electricity, gas and water customers sometimes experience unplanned supply outages, also known as supply interruptions. These are usually caused by weather events, including extreme heat, strong winds, heavy rain, lightning and bushfires. Car accidents and objects such as tree branches and animals can also impact on poles and wires, causing outages. Vandalism, distributor and customer equipment failure, network overload, and underground works can also cause supply outages. The energy and water codes explain the rules about unplanned supply outages. Links to the codes are available later in this fact sheet.

Information about unplanned supply outages

Electricity and gas distributors must give details of the outage and an estimate of when supply will be restored. **Electricity distributors** must, within 30 minutes of a supply outage or emergency (or as soon as practicable), provide information about the outage via a 24-hour phone number and on their website. **Gas distributors** must have a 24-hour telephone number.

Water corporations need to have a 24-hour phone number which provides information about supply outages and the estimated duration of the outage.

Planned outages

Sometimes, energy and water companies need to undertake works on their network (poles, wires, pipes, meters, transformers, substations, pits, etc.) to maintain a safe and reliable supply. Rules about planned outages are in energy and water codes. Links to the codes are available later in this fact sheet.

Electricity distributors can interrupt supply in certain circumstances, however, they need to tell customers about a planned supply outage including details of when it will happen and how long it will last. They need to do this **in writing** at least **four business days** before the planned outage. Electricity distributors must use best endeavours to restore supply as quickly as possible and must provide a 24-hour telephone number for enquiries.

Gas distributors need to provide customers with **10 business days'** notice for planned maintenance or works.

Water corporations must notify customers **in writing** at least **two business days** before a planned supply outage.

Need help?

1800 500 509 (Freecall)

Monday to Friday between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm

Email & Web

Email us at ewovinfo@ewov.com.au
or visit ewov.com.au

Post

GPO Box 469, Melbourne, Victoria 3001

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Another type of outage: electricity load shedding

To protect the overall security of the electricity grid, the Australian Energy Market Operator sometimes tells electricity distributors and transmission companies to 'load shed'. Load shedding means that customers are disconnected from the electricity network for a short period of time to reduce demand on the grid. This helps prevent further blackouts and supply outages. Load shedding usually happens on very hot days when the electricity grid is under pressure.

Supply outage tips

- If you have a life support machine, tell your electricity retailer to register your home as a 'life support property' with your electricity distributor. Also, have a back-up plan for times when there is an electricity outage. Listing your life support status helps distributors prioritise restoring your supply.
- Sometimes it takes longer than expected for supply to be restored after an unplanned outage. Call your company or check its website and social media for up- to-date information.
- Some companies have mobile phone apps that let you monitor supply outages and receive real-time updates. Additionally, some companies let customers register to receive SMS and email updates about supply outages. Check out your energy distributor or water corporation's website for more details.
- **Business customers** must take reasonable precautions to minimise the risk of loss or damage to any equipment, premises or business resulting from poor quality or unreliable electricity supply. Precautions can include business insurance, surge protectors and generators.
- You may be eligible for compensation if you experience loss or damage as a result of a supply outage or interruption, or experience voltage variation (also known as 'power surge' or 'brownout'). Keep records including receipts, photos, technical reports, damaged appliances, etc. as evidence to support your claim. Energy and water companies, and EWOV, may need this information.

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Guaranteed Service Level payments

You may be entitled to an automatic Guaranteed Service Level (GSL) payment from your electricity, gas or water company if it does not meet service standards, including supply standards. Some GSL payments are for the **number** of times you experience supply outages in a year. Other GSL payments are based on how much **time** you were without your energy or water supply.

Electricity GSLs

This Victorian Government website has information about electricity GSLs, including supply service standards: energy.vic.gov.au/safety-and-emergencies/power-outages/

Gas GSLs

The Gas Distribution System Code (esc.vic.gov.au/electricity-and-gas/codes-guidelines-and-policies/gas-distribution-system-code) outlines the gas GSLs and it can be accessed via the link at the end of this fact sheet.

Water GSLs

Nine of Victoria's water corporations have GSL schemes approved by the Essential Services Commission. The GSLs are in the Water Customer Service Code - Urban Water Businesses (esc.vic.gov.au/water/codes-and-guidelines/customer-service-codes). A link to the code is at the end of the fact sheet. You can also contact your water corporation for more information about water GSLs.

GSLs and claims

If the damage or any other monetary loss is directly related to an incident and exceeds the GSL monetary limit, you can claim compensation from your energy or water company. You may need to get a form from your company and provide evidence to support your claim. Your company will assess whether compensation is payable or not. If you do not agree with your company's assessment of your claim, you can contact EWOV for assistance.

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Electricity, gas and water companies

Victorian electricity distributors

Victoria's five electricity distributors have supply outage information for their customers on their websites:

AusNet Services:

outagetracker.com.au

CitiPower and Powercor:

powercor.com.au/power-outages-and-faults/live-outage-map/

Jemena:

jemena.com.au/outages/electricity-outages/

United Energy:

outagemap.unitedenergy.com.au

If you are not sure which is your electricity distributor, check your bill or you can check using this Victorian Government website: energy.vic.gov.au/electricity/electricity-distributors

Victorian water corporations

You can find your water corporation using one of these pages:

water.vic.gov.au/water-reporting/water-in-your-region

water.vic.gov.au/water-industry-and-customers/know-your-water-corporation

Victorian gas distributors

You can find your gas distributor on your bill. Use this website for more information: energy.vic.gov.au/gas/gas-distributors

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More information

The Victorian Government has information and a handy booklet on its website about power outages. (energy.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0029/594362/Preparing-for-a-power-outage-checklist.pdf)

What should you do during an outage? There's more important information here: energy.vic.gov.au/safety-and-emergencies/power-outages

Energy Safe Victoria — what to do in an energy emergency: esv.vic.gov.au/community-safety/emergencies

These energy and water codes explain customer and company rights and responsibilities about supply outages:

Electricity Distribution Code: esc.vic.gov.au/electricity-and-gas/codes-guidelines-and-policies/electricity-distribution-code

Gas System Distribution Code: esc.vic.gov.au/electricity-and-gas/codes-guidelines-and-policies/gas-distribution-system-code

Need further help? If you're not happy with your company's response to your dispute, contact EWOV – we're here to help!

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