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Life support equipment

Protections for Victorians with life support equipment.

What is life support equipment?

Life support equipment is used by customers with certain medical conditions to maintain their health and safety. Examples include oxygen concentrators and kidney dialysis machines.

Need help?

1800 500 509 (Freecall)

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

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What are the protections?

A new schedule of protections for electricity customers who need life support equipment came into effect from 3 February 2020, to be phased in by 1 July 2020 for gas customers. The protections include:

- electricity companies can't disconnect life support customers for failing to pay bills
- electricity distribution companies have to notify life support customers about a planned interruption
- life support customers receive protection once their retailer, distributor or embedded network is made aware of their needs
- clearer processes for medical confirmation
- customers who require gas to fuel their life support equipment having the same rights as those provided to electricity customers.

The protections apply to customers of licensed energy businesses, such as retailers and distributors of electricity and gas, as well as embedded electricity networks consuming more than 40MWh per year, typically located in multi-dwelling apartment buildings, caravan parks and retirement homes. They don't apply to life support equipment fuelled by LPG.

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What do affected customers need to do?

The important steps that affected customers need to take are:

- contact your electricity or gas company to inform them that you use life support equipment
- complete and return the medical confirmation form, provided by your energy company or embedded network
- tell your energy company if your address or phone number changes
- always have emergency and backup plans in place in case your supply goes off without warning, like a list of numbers for the nearest hospital and people who can help you, a spare phone or battery, and fully charged backup equipment.

What do energy companies need to do?

During the transition and when the full changes come into effect, licensed energy companies and embedded networks will have to:

- provide comprehensive information about rights and processes to life support customers
- ask new customers if they are on life support equipment before signing them to an energy plan.
- use a standardised medical form when registering life support customers
- maintain accurate registers of life support customers and have clear communication processes between retailers, distributors and embedded networks.

Visit the Essential Services Commission website (<https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/electricity-and-gas/inquiries-studies-and-reviews/strengthening-protections-life-support-customers-2019>) for more information.

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