

Storms and energy safety

Energy Safe Victoria

Fact sheet

Storms can damage property, bring down powerlines and trees, and cause power outages and flooding. The following gas and electricity safety information can help to protect you and your property.

Preparing for a storm

- Tie LPG cylinders to a secure structure and always keep them upright.
- Never move LPG cylinders inside buildings, sheds or vehicles – they can leak.
- Unplug outdoor electrical appliances and store them in a dry area.
- If flooding is predicted, move electrical appliances to high places around your home or property.
- Know where and how to turn off your power, gas and water supply.

During a storm

- Don't touch the switchboard if it is damaged by the weather. Call a licensed electrician after the storm.

If your home loses power

- Switch off and unplug heating and cooking appliances. They could start a fire if the power returns when no one is around.
- Shut down your solar PV system using the safe isolation procedure located at the solar inverter.
- Do not try to solve any major electrical issues or do major electrical repairs – it is unsafe and illegal. Wait and call a licensed electrician. Be sure to get a Certificate of Electrical Safety once the work is done.

Flickering lights (during and after a storm)

If you have dull or flickering lights, a 'brown out', low voltage or partial supply:

- do not touch the switchboard or anything metal in your home
- turn off any power points that are easy to access and then unplug your appliances
- call your electricity company immediately.

Electric shocks

If you experience tingles or shocks from an electrical appliance or water taps:

- call your electricity company immediately
- get your licensed electrical contractor to check the wiring throughout the property.

Stay away from powerlines

Storms can bring down powerlines and trees can fall cross them. Be aware of the dangers:

- Fallen powerlines can carry electrical currents that can kill. Stay at least eight metres away from them – that's about 2 car lengths.
- Remember, even broken powerlines can carry deadly electrical currents.
- Stay at least 8 metres away from anything a fallen powerline is touching.

After a storm

After the storm passes, check for any damage around your home and be aware of safety risks.

If your home lost power

- Check for damage to any electrical cables, wiring or other electrical equipment. If you identify any issues:
 - do not turn on the power
 - do not touch the damaged equipment or cable
 - call a licensed electrician to make it safe.
- Unplug or turn off all electrical appliances and equipment before switching the power back on. This includes circuit breakers, RCDs (or 'safety switches') or other switches on your switchboard.
 - Turn on the main power switch.
 - Turn on each circuit breaker one at a time.
 - If you have an RCD, press and hold the test button for five seconds. This will turn the power off. The RCD must operate immediately on pressing the test button.
 - Reset the RCD and press the test button a second time. If the RCD operates correctly and turns off the power, reset it and you can begin switching on electrical equipment.
 - If the RCD fails the testing, turn it off and get it replaced by a licensed electrician.

Checking your solar system

Solar panels can produce energy during daylight hours. This means they can be a potential safety risk even if the power is turned off.

- Never go near any equipment or cables if you see any damage to your solar system or battery.
- Never go near any equipment or cables if you have any concerns about them.
- Call a licensed electrician to make the system safe.

Generator safety

Take care when using portable generators. They can cause fires, electrocution, or asphyxiation when not used correctly.

- **Never use a portable generator indoors or in enclosed areas** as they release carbon monoxide – a gas you can't see, smell or taste. It can cause carbon monoxide poisoning if there's not enough ventilation.
- Keep the generator:
 - pointed away from windows and doors to the house
 - out of dry grass to prevent the exhaust igniting the grass
 - away from rain or wet conditions.
- Thoroughly dry your hands before touching the generator.
- Only use heavy-duty extension cords designed for outdoor use. Make sure they are in good condition and rated in watts or amps at least equal to all the connected appliance loads.
- Never modify an extension cord to plug it in to household wiring.
- Never try to power the house by plugging the generator into a wall socket or connecting it to the switchboard. This is a safety risk for you, utility workers and your neighbours using the same network.
- Ensure fuel is stored in proper safety containers and away from ignition sources.
- Before refuelling, turn off the generator and allow it to cool down.

Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG)

- If an LPG cylinder has fallen or upturned, do not attempt to move it. Contact your local LPG distributor.
- If you can hear or smell LPG:
 - turn cylinders off, if safe to do so
 - call your LPG distributor or a licensed gasfitter
 - stay well clear and keep any sources of ignition away, this includes candles, matches, gas lanterns etc.

Natural gas

If you suspect that natural gas is escaping into your home, contact your gas company immediately. Contact details will be on your last gas bill.

If your property was affected by floodwater, get a licensed gasfitter to check the installation before turning the gas supply back on. Damage to components may not be visible or obvious.

Flooding

If your home has been flooded, please see our floods fact sheet:

www.esv.vic.gov.au/community-safety/emergencies/energy-safety-during-floods

More information

More information is available on our website: esv.vic.gov.au

Energy Safe's technical enquiry line is available to electricians and gasfitters: 1800 652 563.

The phone numbers for electricity distribution companies are as follows:

- Citipower 13 12 80
- Powercor 13 24 12
- AusNet Services 13 17 99
- Jemena 13 16 26
- United Energy 13 20 99