



# Plan ahead with our handy electrical safety guide.



# Plan ahead and keep your loved ones safe

Sadly, every year too many families are impacted by electrical accidents at home which could have been avoided.

Common mistakes include:

- not properly maintaining electrical equipment
- the home handy person performing electrical work instead of using a licensed electrical contractor
- coming into contact with overhead powerlines.

This guide is full of information to help you avoid electrical accidents, and keep you and your loved ones safe around electricity. Make sure you take the time to do our home safety check on the next page and read on for more safety tips.

Remember, always be aware of the dangers of electricity and take the time to think ahead, to keep yourself and those you love safe.

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# Plan ahead and do our home safety check

1. Are any of your power points damaged, cracked or coming away from the wall?	YES	NO	<i>If you answered yes to questions 1 or 2, have a licensed electrical contractor check the faulty appliances, wiring or power points.</i>
2. Do you have any appliances with electrical cords that are frayed or damaged?	YES	NO	
3. Do you ever leave appliances out and plugged in after use in the bathroom?	YES	NO	<i>If you answered yes to questions 3, 4 or 5, please remember the following: remove any appliances from wet areas to avoid contact with water, always unplug appliances after use, always dry wet hands before touching appliances or switches, and always turn off the power when plugging or unplugging appliances.</i>
4. Do you ever use electrical appliances with wet hands, or while standing in water or on damp floor?	YES	NO	
5. Do you ever leave the power on while plugging and unplugging appliances?	YES	NO	
6. Do you have multiple double adapters 'piggybacked' on each other?	YES	NO	<i>If you answered yes to question 6, use a power board instead.</i>
7. Do you have a safety switch installed and do you check it every 3 months?	YES	NO	<i>If you answered no to questions 7 or 8, please purchase a fire blanket and extinguisher. Have smoke detectors and a safety switch installed in your home by a qualified electrical contractor, and remember to check them regularly.</i>
8. Do you have smoke detectors installed and check them at least annually, plus do you have a fire blanket and extinguisher?	YES	NO	
9. Do you always use a licensed electrical contractor when you need electrical work done?	YES	NO	<i>If you answered no to question 9, remember it is illegal and extremely dangerous to do your own electrical work. Always invest in a qualified electrical contractor.</i>
10. Do you check for overhead and underground powerlines when maintaining your home and garden outside?	YES	NO	<i>If you answered no to question 10, always look up for overhead powerlines. For underground services call Dial Before You Dig on 1100.</i>

**Make electrical safety checks part of your daily routine.**



**Plan ahead  
inside your  
home.**

## **Appliances and electrical fittings**

- ✓ Switch off the power before plugging or unplugging appliances, and hold the plug, not the cord
- ✓ Always switch off appliances before cleaning them
- ✓ Never stick a knife into a toaster to release stuck toast
- ✓ Always store electric blankets flat and check carefully before use. If there are signs of misuse or damage, have it checked by a licensed electrical contractor
- ✓ Never piggyback double adapters. If you need extra power points, have a licensed electrical contractor install additional outlets, or use a powerboard
- ✓ Always check for concealed electrical cables before drilling into walls, floors and ceilings. Be particularly careful when drilling around power points and light switches.

## **Water and electricity**

- ✓ Never touch electrical appliances or switches with wet hands
- ✓ Check appliances are a safe distance from water
- ✓ Never leave a hair dryer or shaver plugged into a power point - it could fall into the bath or basin.

## Ceiling spaces

Before you go up into the ceiling space:

- ✓ Turn off all main power switches at the switchboard. Also ensure all other generating sources (generator, battery system in off-grid mode) are off
- ✓ Secure the main switches in the 'off' position
- ✓ Label them so no one turns them back on while you're up there
- ✓ Tell someone you are going into the ceiling space.

In the ceiling space:

- ✓ Avoid contact with electrical cables as some may still be 'live', such as the service line or a solar PV system cable
- ✓ Take care not to damage any cables or electrical equipment
- ✓ Take care not to cause ceiling insulation or debris to move near down lights – it may cause a fire.

## Maintenance

- ✓ Install smoke detectors. Test them regularly and change the battery on the 1st of April each year for battery operated models
- ✓ Wear appropriate clothing for the job being done e.g. safety glasses, ear plugs
- ✓ Do regular safety checks to ensure your appliances and electrical fittings are safe
- ✓ Replace damaged power points and frayed, perished or damaged cords.

## Safety switches

- ✓ Ensure your home has a safety switch
- ✓ Test your safety switch every 3 months. Simply press the 'test' button once and the switch should automatically trip
- ✓ If your safety switch does not trip or if you are unsure, seek advice from a licenced electrical contractor.

## Don't do it yourself

- ✓ If you are a home handy person, draw the line at electrical jobs. Doing your own electrical work isn't only dangerous, it's illegal
- ✓ Always use a licensed electrical contractor
- ✓ Always buy ready-made leads and extension cords – never make them yourself at home.

## Electric shocks or tingles

- ✓ Never touch a cord, power point or appliance that has caused a shock. Prevent anyone from using it and have it checked and repaired by a licensed electrical contractor
- ✓ If you experience tingles or shocks from an appliance or water taps, call us immediately, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and call your licensed electrical contractor to check your wiring immediately
- ✓ Never touch or attempt to rescue someone who is receiving an electric shock - you may end up receiving a shock yourself. If possible turn off the power. Stay clear and call triple zero (000).



**Plan ahead  
outside your  
home.**

## **Powerlines and tree safety**

- ✓ Check with your local nursery to ensure that you're planting a powerline friendly tree
- ✓ Before planting, always check for overhead powerlines and consider how tall and wide your tree will grow
- ✓ Don't attempt to trim trees or branches near powerlines. Always call a professional tree trimmer to trim any vegetation that may be close to powerlines.

## **Powerlines - overhead and underground**

- ✓ Always be aware of overhead powerlines when moving equipment and ladders around your property. This includes cleaning and painting, planting or pruning trees, cleaning pools, moving boats, farming equipment and heavy machinery
- ✓ Stay at least 3m from the service line and attachment point - the one that connects power to most homes
- ✓ Stay clear of fallen powerlines, warn others to stay away and call triple zero (000)
- ✓ Don't fly kites, drones, model planes and helicopters anywhere near overhead powerlines
- ✓ Know where underground cables are. Visit Before You Dig at [www.byda.com.au](http://www.byda.com.au) to request your plans.



## Powerlines and motor vehicle accidents

Vehicle accidents can bring down overhead powerlines or cause damage to electrical equipment at ground level. If you are involved in an accident or come across one, it is important to remember that the vehicle and anything else, such as fences and trees, in contact with powerlines, could be 'live'.

After an accident:

- ✓ Don't panic. Try to remain calm
- ✓ Treat all powerlines and other electrical equipment as if they are 'live'
- ✓ Stay in the vehicle until the power has been isolated and the powerlines removed
- ✓ Don't risk being electrocuted by attempting to leave the vehicle before power is disconnected
- ✓ Warn bystanders to stay a minimum of 10 metres from the vehicle and anything else in contact with powerlines at the accident site
- ✓ Don't attempt to rescue or allow others to approach the vehicle in contact with powerlines. All too often secondary injuries or deaths occur because of others trying to help
- ✓ Call triple zero (000) immediately to report powerlines down and a life threatening situation.

## Property poles and privately owned powerlines

Some homes in Queensland have poles on their property that connect to the electricity network. The property owner is responsible for keeping these poles in a safe condition to avoid an electrical incident or fire.

Over time, poles are prone to deterioration. The base of poles may rot, rust or be affected by termites, leading to a serious situation. Signs of deterioration may include:

- ✓ poles leaning excessively
- ✓ evidence of rotting or corrosion at ground level or just below
- ✓ electrical fittings or wires that are broken or pulling away from the pole
- ✓ cross arms splitting, loose or sagging
- ✓ trees growing into or near poles and powerlines.

In many cases, defects may not be readily visible. A safety inspection is recommended every five years by a qualified electrical contractor who can advise if repairs or replacement are required.

You can find a licensed electrical contractor in your local directory, online or by calling Master Electricians Australia on 1300 889 198 or the National Electrical and Communications Association on (07) 3276 7950.

If you are a tenant or leasing a property, notify the property owner, property manager or landlord immediately if a power pole or powerline requires maintenance or repair.

Contact us if you are unsure who owns the pole.

## Festive lighting

- ✓ Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully before use
- ✓ Look for an approval number starting with either Q, V, N, NSW or S, followed by a five digit number or the regulatory compliance mark logo, which indicates compliance with Australian Standards
- ✓ Inspect festive lighting before use for any damage, or wear and tear
- ✓ Use powerboards fitted with overload protection, not double adapters
- ✓ Never piggyback plugs if installing multiple sets of festive lights
- ✓ Turn off festive lighting when going out or to bed, when replacing light bulbs, and when it's raining
- ✓ Supervise children around festive lights at all times
- ✓ Pack and store festive lighting in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

## Festive lighting extension cords

- ✓ Use only ready-made cords or have them made by a licensed electrical contractor
- ✓ Do not use cords that have damaged insulation or exposed wires
- ✓ Do not expose joins in extension cords to the weather
- ✓ Cover extension cords that are lying across walkways and do not lay across driveways at anytime
- ✓ Unwind extension cords fully to avoid overheating.

## Festive outdoor lighting

- ✓ Ensure all lights, extension leads and powerboards are specifically designed and approved for outdoor use
- ✓ Check all outdoor connections are weatherproof and are suitable for their intended use
- ✓ Don't pass electrical leads through doors and windows
- ✓ Secure lights to minimise the risk of breakage in wind or storms
- ✓ Use extra-low voltage equipment when attaching lights to fences, metalwork, roofs and downpipes
- ✓ Avoid placing temporary festive lighting above or around your pool
- ✓ Keep yourself and your lights well clear of overhead powerlines - at least 3m away
- ✓ Wear non-slip footwear and safety equipment when climbing ladders and installing lights on the roof, and other hard to reach areas.





# Be prepared for storms and cyclones.

## Be prepared

- ✓ Tidy up unsecured objects around your home and yard
- ✓ Trim loose branches, but call a professional tree trimmer if they're near powerlines
- ✓ Have extra cash on hand - ATMs and banks may not be operating
- ✓ Check your storm kit and ensure you have water containers and a BBQ, or other gas or coal cooking facilities
- ✓ Pack spare clothing, shoes, sturdy gloves and hats in waterproof containers
- ✓ Freeze water for alternative refrigeration should there be a power failure
- ✓ Make sure your pet's registration and tags are current. Stock up on food, water and medicines for each pet, plus newspapers for their sanitary needs
- ✓ Identify a safe place to evacuate to should a storm surge or flood threaten
- ✓ Install a surge protector in your home to protect sensitive electronic equipment.
- ✓ If you or someone else in your household depends on life support equipment, check if you're eligible for our Life Support program, which provides members with valuable information on power supply interruptions.

## Before

- ✓ Ensure mobile phone batteries are fully charged and have a landline phone ready, as cordless phone base stations don't work without electricity
- ✓ Board or tape glass on exposed windows and secure all doors
- ✓ Fill containers with water, including bath and sink, in case water supplies are cut
- ✓ Ensure your car has a full tank of fuel
- ✓ Store your important documents, medical prescriptions, mementos, photos and valuables in a waterproof container in a secure location like your car boot
- ✓ Heed evacuation warnings if you're in caravans, tents or low lying areas
- ✓ Stay indoors as the storm approaches and ensure pets are secured safely under shelter
- ✓ Turn off and unplug sensitive electrical appliances and also unplug TV, DVD and VCR aerial cables.

## During

- ✓ Stay inside and away from windows and doors
- ✓ Listen to battery operated radios for weather updates and don't go outside until you know it's safe
- ✓ Use a torch to find your way around
- ✓ Don't use a landline phone during a storm. Use a mobile, but only in emergencies.

## After

- ✓ Warn others and stay well away from fallen powerlines. Always assume they're 'live' and dangerous. Report them immediately to triple zero (000)
- ✓ Listen to a battery operated radio for official advice and power restoration information
- ✓ If you experience tingles or shocks from an electrical appliance or water taps, call us immediately, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Also call your licensed electrical contractor to check your electrical wiring immediately
- ✓ Take care around your switchboard if it's outdoors and wear synthetic or rubber soled shoes. If you're in any doubt about the switchboard's safety, stay clear and call your licensed electrical contractor
- ✓ Don't use any appliances that have been wet or damaged. Have them checked by a licensed electrical contractor
- ✓ Alert neighbours if you think there may be any danger and don't go sight-seeing
- ✓ If your home or business is damaged preventing the reconnection of power, have a licensed electrical contractor repair electrical damage. Notify us when repairs are complete so power can be restored.

## Around fallen powerlines

- ✓ Take care when cleaning up after a storm, as high winds and debris can bring overhead powerlines down
- ✓ Be cautious around fallen branches, debris and water as they could be hiding fallen powerlines
- ✓ Don't take chances. If you find something you think might be a powerline, always assume it is 'live' and dangerous, keep well away, warn others and call triple zero (000)
- ✓ Warn children not to play or swim in floodwaters, as there may be unseen 'live' and dangerous electrical wiring or fallen powerlines in or around the water, which may be hidden by debris.

## Generators

- ✓ Ensure you read the manufacturer's instructions carefully before using a generator
- ✓ Never use suicide leads. These leads are illegally made power leads that are used to connect generators to the wiring of your house. These dangerous leads have exposed parts at both ends which will cause electric shock to anyone touching them
- ✓ Appliances or stand-alone lighting should be plugged directly into the generator. Ensure all appliances are off before connecting them
- ✓ A generator should never be used inside. This includes a garage, carport, basement, crawl space or other enclosed or partially enclosed area – even if well ventilated

- ✓ Ensure you place the generator well away from open windows, doors and vents that could allow dangerous carbon monoxide to travel indoors (this includes neighbours)
- ✓ Use heavy-duty extension cords rated for outdoor use.

## Going away

- ✓ If you're going away, switch off and unplug all non-essential electrical equipment to avoid damage from power surges.

## If the power goes out

- ✓ If you're experiencing dull or flickering lights, turn off and unplug sensitive electrical appliances like your television, computer and DVD at the power point
- ✓ Check from your window to see if only your home is affected or if it's more widespread
- ✓ If you've seen or heard something that could help identify the problem, stay well clear and call us
- ✓ For outage updates visit our website, call us, or listen to your radio for updates.



# Keeping safe around solar PV and battery systems.

As solar PV systems are powered by the sun, they can continue to generate power even if the mains power has been disconnected, or the panels have been turned off at the switchboard. As a result, they can pose an electrical safety risk for residents, emergency services personnel and our crews after storms and cyclones or in times of flooding.

## During a storm or cyclone

- ✓ Do not attempt to turn off a solar PV system if any of the components of the system are wet
- ✓ Do not assume your system is safe if we have disconnected supply. PV systems still produce DC voltage while there is daylight.
- ✓ We recommend turning off your solar PV and battery storage systems before a storm hits to prevent additional damage that could occur to your systems from power surges.

## After a storm or cyclone

- ✓ Follow the shutdown procedures if your roof or solar PV system has been damaged or you're concerned about the integrity of your system
- ✓ Do not attempt to reconnect your solar PV system or access your roof after severe storms or if your roof is damaged. Contact a Clean Energy Council accredited installer and ask them to recommission the system for you. A list of accredited installers can be found on the Clean Energy Council website: [www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au](http://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au)
- ✓ If an installer is not available, contact a licensed electrical contractor who can check your system to ensure that it is safe.
- ✓ If your battery storage system has been damaged or water has entered the battery cabinet due to flooding or rain, stay away from and do not touch the battery system. Contact a licensed electrical contractor to test and make safe.

## Preparing for a flood

- ✓ Follow shutdown procedures which should be located at the inverter and/or on the main switchboard
- ✓ Turn off the inverter AC mains isolator
- ✓ Turn off the PV array isolator
- ✓ If there seems to be a risk that the water level could reach up to the inverters and cables, also arrange to turn off the roof top array isolator (if fitted).

## During a flood

- ✓ Do not attempt to turn off a solar PV system if any of the components are covered in water or if parts of the system are still wet
- ✓ If forced onto the roof, keep well away from solar panels and wiring if the system parts are submerged
- ✓ Do not assume your system is safe if we have disconnected supply. PV systems still produce DC voltage while there is daylight.

Remember: Do not reconnect a solar PV system unless a licensed electrical contractor has certified the installation is safe. And treat all solar PV installations as if they are 'live'.

## After a flood

- ✓ Do not attempt to operate any switches as residual moisture may have caused the solar PV system to become 'live'
- ✓ Contact a Clean Energy Council accredited installer and ask them to recommission the system for you. A list of accredited installers can be found on the Clean Energy Council website: [www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au](http://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au)
- ✓ If an installer is not available, contact a licensed electrical contractor who can check your system to ensure that it is safe.

**IMPORTANT:** If your home or business becomes inundated with floodwater and the mains power is still connected, contact us immediately to arrange disconnection.

# Be prepared for floods.



## Before

- ✓ If you're in a flood prone location, consider relocating your switchboard and any wiring in your home that may be below previous flood levels
- ✓ Where possible, move any electrical equipment to higher ground
- ✓ Turn off and unplug any electrical appliances that may become inundated with water.

## During

- ✓ If moving around your area in boats, be aware of reduced powerline height clearances as flood waters will make you closer to the powerlines and power poles can also move from the force of flood waters
- ✓ Warn children not to swim in flood waters.

## After

- ✓ Unplug all electrical appliances affected by water and have them inspected by a licensed electrical contractor before use
- ✓ Do not operate electrical appliances or switches while standing in water or bare feet
- ✓ Have a licensed electrical contractor check or isolate any parts of your electrical installation that have been affected by water – especially if the switchboard has been submerged or if your safety switch has tripped
- ✓ Take extra care around your switchboard. If it's outdoors, wear synthetic or rubber soled shoes. If you are in any doubt about your switchboard's safety, stay clear and call your licensed electrical contractor.

# Reconnecting power after severe weather

We may have disconnected power to some customer premises due to damage. If this has happened to your premises, these are the steps to restore your power.

## Restoration Process

Getting reconnected after storm damage, flooding or inundation



### 1 You are disconnected for safety

We have inspected and disconnected power to your premises due to storm damage, flooding, or inundation, and left an electricity defect report in your meter box.

### 2 Arrange a safety check

You, your building manager/body corporate, or landlord, need to arrange a safety check by a licensed electrical contractor.

### 3 Make safe

Your licensed electrical contractor will complete a safety check and fix any defects. They will complete and sign the contractor section of our electricity defect report and leave onsite to confirm your premises is safe for reconnection.

### 4 Arrange reconnection

You, your building manager/body corporate, or landlord will need to then contact us to arrange reconnection. Ask your licensed electrical contractor if they will do this on your behalf.

### 5 Premises is reconnected

Our crew will attend and confirm the defects have been rectified and reconnect your premises to the electricity network. You'll have power as soon as the network has been safely re-energised.

**Note:** *If you know your electrical fittings have been damaged, flooded or inundated, you don't need to wait for an electricity defect report. Arrange a safety check and your licensed electrical contractor will leave a certificate of test and compliance in the meter box for us.*

# Emergency contacts

	Ergon Network	Energex
<b>Faults only</b> 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	13 22 96	13 62 62
<b>Life threatening emergencies only</b> 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	triple zero (000) or 13 16 70	triple zero (000) or 13 19 62
<b>Police Fire Ambulance</b>		triple zero (000)
<b>SES</b> For storm and flood damage	Ph:	
<b>Local council emergency</b>	Ph:	
<b>Local hospital</b>	Ph:	
<b>General enquiries</b> 7.00am - 5.30pm Monday to Friday	13 74 66	13 12 53
Have your National Meter Identifier (NMI) number available. You will find this on your electricity bill.	NMI:	
	<a href="http://ergon.com.au">ergon.com.au</a>	<a href="http://energex.com.au">energex.com.au</a>

