

# Energy safety during floods

Energy Safe Victoria

## Fact sheet

Energy Safe Victoria provides the following gas and electricity safety information for people affected by floods:

### Before evacuating

Ensure all electrical and gas-powered heating and cooking appliances are turned off, as there is a risk of fire if power is restored and there is no one at the property.

#### Electricity

- Turn off all switches at the main electrical switchboard, including the Main Switch.
- Unplug all your appliances and if you can, lift them up so they will remain clear of any floodwater that may inundate your property.

#### Solar

- Turn your solar system off at the inverter and then turn off at the switchboard (all switches on the switchboard should be in the OFF position). The solar system will have information on shut down procedures.

#### Batteries

- Turn solar batteries off. Follow the shutdown procedure which will be close to battery system.
- Do not attempt to disassemble the battery or open any of the panels.

#### Gas

- You should turn off your gas supply by locating your gas meter and turning the gas supply service valve to the "OFF" position by rotating the handle to so that it is horizontal.

#### LPG cylinders

- Before evacuating, make sure all LPG cylinders are closed (clockwise to close the cylinder valve) at the valve on top of the cylinder. Do not disconnect any appliance unless the LPG cylinder is being relocated away from danger.
- Leave cylinders in the location they were installed. Do not move any LPG cylinders inside buildings, sheds, basements or vehicles. A damaged LPG cylinder may leak creating a hazard.
- LPG cylinders will be buoyant and will readily float away in floodwater, creating a hazard downstream. It is essential that all LPG cylinders be restrained by tying them to a fixed structure using cables or strong ropes. Keep cables and ropes free of the LPG pigtail connection, which is the copper or flexible pipe.
- For LPG cylinders stored in cages, it is sufficient to ensure the cage gates are securely locked. Secure the cage by tying it to a fixed structure. LPG cylinders in cages are very stable in high winds.

### During the emergency

- Don't stay in a house or building that is inundated by flood water when the power is connected.

- Don't use an electrical appliance, sink or bath if you feel a shock or tingling sensation from any metal or plumbing. Avoid these appliances or objects and contact your distribution company to report the problem as soon as you can.
- Don't leave your vehicle if powerlines have fallen across it unless you are in immediate danger. Stay inside and call 000 for help.
- If travelling by boat in flood waters, don't try to raise or move any powerlines you find. Don't try to travel under the powerlines either as the rising waters will put you closer to them.
- Stay well clear of electricity poles, substations, fallen powerlines and any objects in contact with them. If the electricity poles and wires are covered in flood waters, then stay at least 150 metres away and call your electricity distributor to report it.

## On return to your property

### Electricity

- Only turn your power on at the main electrical switchboard if water has **not** entered the property.
- If water has entered your property, **do not** put the power back on until the property wiring has been tested by a licensed electrician.
- If any appliances have been inundated, do not plug them in or switch them on until they have been tested by a licensed electrician.
- If no water has entered the property, you can turn on the switches at the switchboard.
  - If any switches do not turn on, or automatically turn off, this indicates the wiring may be affected and you must call a qualified electrician to test your wiring and appliances.
  - Plug your appliances in and check that they are working.
- If there are continuing power supply problems such as fuses blowing or circuit breakers and safety switches turning off, contact a licensed electrician.
- If you are using a generator, do not attempt to connect it to the wiring of your home. A generator should only be used outside, with an extension cord to supply power direct to appliances such as the fridge or freezer. Using a generator indoors creates a number of safety risks including the potential for carbon monoxide poisoning or a fire.
- If there are fallen powerlines, stay more than 8 to 10 metres away. You are at risk of electrocution if you stand near fallen powerlines. Always treat fallen powerlines as live even when they are broken or damaged.

### Contact an Electrician

- To find an electrician in your area contact:
  - the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) on 1300 300 031
  - Master Electricians 1300 889 198

### Contact a gasfitter

- Go to the Master Plumbers website and enter your postcode to find a local gasfitter  
<https://plumber.com.au/>

### Solar

- If your home has been impacted by floodwater, do not switch on solar at the mains nor the inverter. The solar system and battery must be inspected by a licensed electrician before it can be re-energised.
- You should treat a solar system as live until it is inspected by a licensed electrician.
- If your solar panels appear to have sustained damage, do not go near the equipment or cables, even if the power to the house is turned off. The system may still be energised. Call a licensed electrician to test and make it safe.

## Batteries

- If your property has been flood affected, do not switch on your battery. Call a licensed electrician to check your battery system.
- You should treat a battery system as live until it has been inspected.

## Gas

- If your home has been impacted by floodwater, do not attempt to turn the gas supply back on. The gas line may have water in it and must be checked by a licensed gasfitter, who will need to rectify this by purging the fitting line. They will also assist with relighting pilot lights.
- The contact details for your gas distributor can be found on the top right side of your gas bill.
- Please **do not** use outdoor gas appliances for heating indoors if your electricity and gas are not working. This is unsafe and can significantly increase the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and other health hazards. All gas appliances require fresh air to operate and ventilation to allow the products of combustion to escape.

## LPG cylinders

- Check all LPG tanks and cylinders to ensure they are secured. **Do not** attempt to recover LPG tanks or cylinders from floodwater.
- Report any smell of LPG immediately to emergency services. If you smell gas:
  - Keep the area clear of people, pets and ignition sources (flames, sparks, smokers, electrical appliances) until the leak can be confirmed, stopped, and the area made safe.
- Leave all tank and cylinder valves closed, until the gas installation can be checked by a gasfitter. The LPG regulator or pipework may have been damaged and will be dangerous if the cylinder valves are opened.
- If an LPG cylinder has fallen over and can be reached safely, stand the cylinder upright and check both the cylinder and valve for damage before use. **Do not** use a damaged cylinder.