



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW

Energy and water outages



If your supply is interrupted call your distributor or check their website. If you don't know who your distributor is, contact your retailer to find out.

Under the rules, electricity and gas distributors must use their 'best endeavours' to restore supply as soon as possible.

Under Sydney Water and Hunter Water customer contracts, they must inform residential customers in writing at least two business days before the planned outage. The notice period for business customers is at least seven days.

Sydney Water and Hunter Water are required to use their best endeavours to ensure the planned outage is no longer than five hours.

Unplanned energy and water outages

Electricity, gas and water customers sometimes experience unplanned outages, also known as supply interruptions.

These are usually caused by weather events, including strong winds, heavy rain, lightning and bushfires. Tree branches, animals, car accidents, vandalism, excavation work, network equipment failure and faulty customer equipment can also cause outages.

The National Energy Consumer Framework and the distributor's connection contract explain the rules about unplanned outages. Under the rules, electricity and gas distributors must use their 'best endeavours' to restore supply as soon as possible.

Under Sydney Water and Hunter Water customer contracts they must restore supply as quickly as possible and must provide access to emergency water supplies where reasonably practicable and necessary under the circumstances.

Planned outages

To maintain a safe and reliable supply, energy and water distributors need to interrupt supply from time to time to carry out maintenance or development work. The National Energy Consumer Framework and the distributors' customer contracts contain information about planned outages.

Electricity and gas distributors have the right to interrupt supply at any time, however, they need to inform customers when it will happen and how long it will last. This should be done in writing at least four business days before the planned outage. The notice must:

- specify the date, time and expected duration of the outage
- include a 24 hour phone number for enquiries
- advise customers to call the distributor with any enquiries.

In NSW, a shorter notice period may be accepted if it is agreed in writing by the distributor and the customer.

Provider responsibilities

Within 30 minutes of an outage or emergency, electricity and gas distributors are expected to make information about the outage available on a 24 hour phone service. They also have to provide an estimate of when supply will be restored or when information about the restoration will be available.

Sydney Water and Hunter Water must also have a 24 hour phone service set up to respond to enquiries about outages.



Sydney Water and Hunter Water must give written notice at least two business days before a planned water supply interruption.



Customer service standards

You may be entitled to an automatic payment from your distributor if it doesn't meet regulated customer service standards/customer charter obligations.

There are customer service standards in NSW for the length and frequency of certain supply outages. Make sure you ask your electricity distributor about these at the time of the outage. Claims for customer service payments must be made within three months of the outage. In some circumstances, Sydney Water and

Hunter Water provide rebates to customers affected by supply interruptions over five hours, low water pressure and wastewater overflow.

Business customers must take reasonable precautions to minimise the risk of loss or damage to any equipment, premises or trade resulting from outages; for example, insurance, surge protectors, uninterruptable power supply systems (UPS), phase failure protection and generators.

Claims

If you suffer damage or monetary loss from an event within the distributor's control, you may be able to claim compensation from your energy or water distributor.

You will need to fill in a claim form and provide evidence so the distributor can assess the claim. If the distributor decides not to pay your claim, it should provide you with the reasons for the decision in writing and give you EWON's contact details. You can contact us for assistance if you don't agree with its assessment.

Under the National Energy Retail Law, a retailer or distributor is liable for events they caused 'in bad faith' or through 'negligence'.

The law allows NSW energy distributors to limit their liability as part of their customer contracts. Generally these contracts state that:

- there is no guarantee of uninterrupted or faultless supply
- they are not responsible for supply events that are outside of their control, including technical limitations, random failures on their distribution system, system demands and other incidents including accidents, weather conditions and the acts of other persons
- some events are a normal part of the operation of the network (eg automatic protection operations that cut supply when it detects a fault).

Sydney Water and Hunter Water contracts specify that if you suffer any loss as a result of their activities, you should claim it on your insurance. If the damage isn't covered by insurance, they may offer you some compensation.

If your claim is unsuccessful

If the distributor denies your claim, contact us. We can review the decision and assess if it is fair and reasonable under the circumstances, having regard to relevant laws, codes and guidelines and good industry practice.

If your insurance company denies your claim, you may be able to make a complaint to the Australian Financial Complaints Authority - phone 1800 931 678 or visit afca.org.au.

Life support customers

If someone in your household uses life support equipment, ask your electricity retailer or distributor to register your home as a 'life support property'. You should also do this each time you move addresses. Registering your premises helps distributors schedule planned outages, but will not stop planned or unplanned outages. It's best to have a backup plan to be on the safe side.

Registered life support properties get the same four day notice of planned interruptions as other customers.

What is the best way to get updates about an outage?

Call your distributor or check its website. Some distributors use social media and some have mobile phone apps that let you monitor supply outages and receive real-time updates. Check out your energy or water distributor's website for details.

Make a complaint or enquiry

Freecall	1800 246 545* Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm
Freefax	1800 812 291
Freepost	Reply Paid 86550 Sydney South NSW 1234
Interpreter	131 450
TTY/Voice	133 677
Online	ewon.com.au
In person	Level 11, 133 Castlereagh St, Sydney, NSW 2000

* If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and we will call you back.