

MERRA Power outage tips:

1) Be safe

Always treat all electrical items as **live** during a power outage

Prevent outages by planting sensibly and keeping your **trees trimmed ... ideally 1.2 metres away from all powerlines**. Your trees touching wires may trip breakers that cut your neighbours' power supply. Generally trees inside your boundary are your responsibility... those on the road/verge are Vector's responsibility. Call Vector if your roadside trees need trimming. Sometimes if you 'talk nicely to them' they may assist within your boundary. When trimming your own trees do it on a dry day and ensure you keep yourself and all equipment well away from lines. If in doubt contact Vector for their advice.

Turn off sensitive items such as tvs, computers, etc off at the wall for the duration of an outage. There is always a risk that a work-related power surge or a 'scratchy' reconnection could damage your equipment.

2) Understanding Phases:

Power to your house may come via one or more of three phases (wires) in the street. In an outage one or more of these phases may be out meaning that either: all of your house is without power, part of your house is without power, or your house has power but your neighbours may not (and vice versa).

3) Beware 'Brown Out':

Sometimes when the phase (wire) supplying your house's power is damaged or disconnected the power travelling through another phase (wire) can 'induce' a smaller than usual flow (current) in the damaged one. Signs of this are lights glowing dimly or flashing or fridges and pumps making unusual noises (eg pumps humming but not working). This can **fatally damage** electrical equipment (especially pumps and fridges).

It is important to TURN OFF all electronics, LED lighting, and anything with electric motors (eg fridges, pumps, fans, septic systems) until you are sure full power is restored. If you have an old incandescent light bulb (not LED) you can use this to monitor when full power is back on.

4) Garage door releases:

If you need to open your garage door in a power cut you need to release the door from the electric opener and open it by lifting it manually. Most doors are released by **pulling the cord** that hangs down from the mechanism. Sometimes springs are not well adjusted so the door may be heavy to lift and may not stay up. Take care not to allow the door to crash down on you or your vehicle. Once you have lowered the door manually pull and release the cord once more and when power is restored activate the electric controls (you may have to do a full up and down cycle for it to lock back in). Note some release cords will be perished and break... replace the broken one with stout cord.

5) Resetting Pumps and other electric motors:

Sometimes a power cut or brown out will cause an electric motor's cut out switch to activate. On most pump motors this is a small (usually red) 'reset' button on the casing or toward the rear of the motor itself. Pushing the switch back in should reactivate the motor.

6) Checking breakers on your fusebox/distribution board.

Sometimes a power cut or brownout will cause a breaker (MCB, RCD) on your board to trip (click off). If you find electrical appliances or lights etc are not working after an outage open your fusebox and see that all the breakers' switches are pointing up (the 'on' position). If any are not you can flick them back up to reactivate that circuit. (Nb some older installations may have buttons on each breaker that pop out and will need to be pushed back in.) If the breaker does not hold in the 'on' position that denotes a fault that might be dangerous and should be checked by a registered electrician.

7) Water and Sewage during a power outage.

Most local homes will have no water supply during a power cut. Some homes have taps that are lower than the water level in their tanks. If you can locate such a tap you may be fortunate enough to access water during a power cut. It's worth considering having a tap installed near the base of your tank for use during outages. Otherwise you'll need to stockpile some water prior to planned outages or use a bucket on a rope to draw water out of your tank from the access hatch.

Many septic systems rely on electric pumps and aerators to function properly. During a power cut it is wise to minimise the flow into pumped systems as they will tend to overflow. With water off too this is usually self-regulating... however if you are still using water go easy on toilet flushing and putting water down drains to avoid an unpleasant overflow.

8) Using the MERRA Generators:

MERRA has generators that will be rostered for use at residents' request during a prolonged (>12 hour) power outage. Residents will be contacted and asked if they wish to be included on the roster. Use is at your own risk.

Important Notes:

- a) Generators must be **level and outdoors** when in use. Do not use them in confined spaces such as garages due to the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning and overheating.
- b) Generator trailers are not designed for general road use so must be **towed SLOWLY** (<20kph) and **CAREFULLY** especially around corners and over rough surfaces. Check tyres are inflated and generator is stowed/secured properly.
- c) Generators are **rostered** (generally 2 hours at a time every 24 hrs) for essential functions only such as keeping freezers cold and emergency pumping. Please keep to your rostered time and respect the needs of the next neighbour in the queue. The generator will be delivered and picked up at specified times unless other delivery arrangements are made with you.
- d) **Do not overload the generator** as damage both to the generator and your appliance(s) may result. Check the wattage of your appliance(s) is within the (continuous) capability of the generator (seek guidance if unsure). Set up your extension lead from the generator directly to the appliance(s) to be powered and ensure the generator is running before switching the appliance on. If more than one appliance is to be powered at the same time (not recommended) then they should be switched on in turn to ensure both start up ok and are within the generator's capacity.
- e) MERRA does not stockpile fuel for safety and durability reasons. **Please top up the generator** after your use with 91 petrol from your lawnmower or outboard supply (not 2 stroke). Otherwise a **donation** to cover fuel cost is appreciated.