



Understanding how your home is supplied

Electricity is delivered through a network that reduces high voltage power down to a level suitable for homes. A service line then connects this network directly to your property, which is the homeowner's responsibility.

Most homes use a single-phase supply, meaning one single line powers the entire property. If that line loses power, the whole house will be without power. Some homes have a three-phase supply, which can result in only part of the house losing power during an outage. In some cases, your home may lose power while neighbouring properties are unaffected, particularly if the issue is with your service line (the line that goes from your home to the powerline on the street).

Faults can also cause unstable power rather than a full outage. Signs include flickering lights or unusual noises from appliances. If this occurs, switch off electronics until normal power is fully restored. This can 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.

Understanding power outages

'Unplanned' power outages happen for many reasons and aren't always preventable, common causes include weather, vegetation or branches falling on lines, vehicle damage, and wildlife contacting lines. Severe storms can also affect large areas.

'Planned' power outages, however, are scheduled in advance so essential maintenance and upgrades can be carried out on the network. While they can be inconvenient, they are necessary to maintain long term reliability.

It's important to understand that no electricity network is completely fault-proof. There may be times when power cannot be restored immediately, especially if it's unplanned and conditions are unsafe for crews to begin repairs.

The process of power restoration

Some handy information on how Vector restore power can be found on their [website](#).

During an unplanned outage:

1. Customer reports the outage and subscribes for updates on the Vector website – <https://help.vector.co.nz/map>
2. Crew is dispatched, fault found, and an estimated time power will be restored is shared with the customer
3. Repairs completed and power restored.

Depending on the complexity of the fault, we may need to engage third-party support before commencing repairs. This can include services such as traffic management and arborists for tree trimming, in line with strict regulatory obligations.

Planned outage

1. Up to four working days before you will receive a notification (letter/email) of your power outage from Vector. Customers can monitor on the outage centre on Vector's website here <https://help.vector.co.nz/map>
2. Reminders may be sent via SMS
3. Outage starts, work is completed, and power is restored.

If you don't get a planned outage notification, contact your retailer to update your details. Email/text reminders can only be sent when your retailer provides your email and mobile number. If you rent a property and your landlord pays your power bill, your landlord will likely receive the power outage notification. In emergencies, notice of your outage may be shorter (e.g., urgent safety work). Sometimes planned power outage work can run over the stated end time, we make every effort to inform customers of any overruns in a timely manner.

Practical advice and safety tips during a power outage

Always treat power lines and electrical equipment as live. Stay at least ten metres away from fallen lines, damaged equipment, and unstable trees.

- Use a torch instead of candles, keep spare batteries handy, and ensure at least one phone is fully charged.
- Switch off sensitive electronics at the wall to protect against power surges, and ensure stoves, kettles, heaters and anything with electric motors (eg fridges, pumps, fans, septic systems) are turned off.
- Keep fridge and freezer doors closed. A freezer can keep food frozen for up to 24 hours.
- Take care if leaving your property, as streetlights and traffic signals may not be working.
- Avoid using electrical appliances in wet conditions, especially if barefoot.
- If you rely on electricity for medical equipment, you should have a backup response plan in place and be ready to use it when required (your GP can help you). You should also register your medically dependent status with your electricity retailer (Mercury, Contact etc.). If you have a health concern during a power outage, immediately contact your health provider, or call 111 in an emergency
- After a power cut or brownout, a breaker (MCB or RCD) may trip. Check your switchboard and ensure all switches are in the **on** position, resetting any that have tripped (some older systems may require pushing a button back in). If a breaker will not stay on, this may indicate a fault and should be checked by a registered electrician.

Garage doors, electric motors and pumps

- To open an electric garage door during a power cut, pull the release cord to disconnect the opener and lift the door manually, taking care as it may be heavy or unstable. Once power is restored, reconnect it by pulling the cord again and operating a full open and close cycle. Ensure the release cord is in good condition, as older cords may break and should be replaced if needed.

- 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.

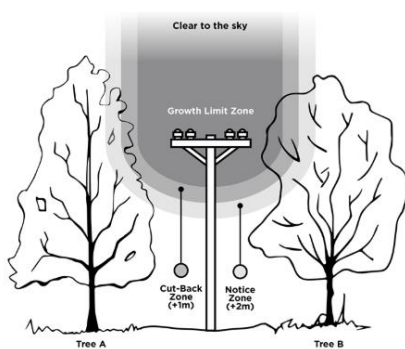
Water supply and septic tank

- During a power cut, many homes may lose water supply if it relies on electric pumps. If available, you may still access water from taps below tank level, otherwise plan by storing water or drawing from your tank manually. Minimise water use during outages, especially if you have a pumped septic system, to help prevent water overflow.
- 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.

Trees and powerlines

Trees and vegetation are a major cause of outages. Overgrown trees not only cause outages, but they also prevent Vector's crews from repairing equipment quickly and delay the process of restoring power. Managing trees is a community responsibility and by working with Vector, Auckland Council and arborists, we can help prevent power outages and keep the community safe.

- Under the [Tree Regulations](#) you are legally required to keep any trees located on your property clear of the growth limit zone (excluding the service line to your house). Refer to the diagram below.



Overhead Line Voltage	Growth Limit Zone	Cut-back Zone	Notice Zone
Power lines (230-400 V)	0.5m	1.5m	2.5m
High voltage lines (6.6 kV)	1.6m	2.6m	3.6m
High voltage lines (11kV)	1.6m	2.6m	3.6m
High voltage lines (33 kV)*	2.5m	3.5m	4.5m

*Clear to the sky requirement

- Plant and maintain trees at least 2–3 metres from power lines. Refer to Vector's planting guide [here](#).
- Trimming near power lines is dangerous, only approved utility arborists should work within four metres of a network line. You can find an arborist list [here](#).
- Trees located on the street berm are owned by Auckland Council. Customers should report trees growing close to power lines to them (both urban and rural). They will organise an arborist to come and trim the tree away from Vector's network lines.

Using generators safely

MERRA has generators available for residents during prolonged outages greater than 12 hours. Residents will be contacted and can request to be added to the roster. Please note, use is at your own risk.

Generators are allocated on a roster, typically for two hours within each 24-hour period. Please stick to your allocated time and be mindful of others waiting to use the generator.

Generators will be delivered and collected at scheduled times, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed.

MERRA does not stockpile fuel for safety and storage reasons. After use, please top up the generator with 91 petrol from your own supply, such as a lawnmower or outboard tank. Do not use 2 stroke fuel.

If you are unable to refuel, a contribution towards fuel costs is appreciated.

Safe use guidelines

- Operate generators outdoors on a level surface and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Never use a generator indoors or in enclosed spaces such as garages due to carbon monoxide risk.
- Do not overload the generator. Ensure the total wattage of connected appliances is within its rated capacity.
Check the generator is secure before use.
- Generator trailers are not designed for normal road use and should be towed slowly and carefully.
- Before towing, check tyres are properly inflated and the unit is secure.