

UNDERSTANDING COMPENSATION AVAILABLE AFTER A POWER OUTAGE

The storm event on 13 February 2024 left hundreds of thousands of residents and businesses in Gippsland without power for an extended period.

There are still some people without power today as restoration works are ongoing across Gippsland.

The impact of the storm on the community has been significant.

People have suffered financial losses, including spoiled food, as a result of the storm and subsequent power outage.

Many people are asking whether compensation is available for these losses.

There is different support available depending on your personal circumstances.

Compensation available from electricity provider

There are guaranteed service levels (GSL) that electricity distributors are required to provide certain customers. These are set out in the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice. If a distributor fails to meet the minimum service levels, they are required to make payments to customers.

The compensation payable by a distributor for the failure to supply power at the expected level is limited.

The payments vary depending on the circumstances.

Who is the 'distributor'?

There are five (5) electricity distributors in Victoria: AusNet, CitiPower, Jemena, Powercor and United Energy. It is not your retailer.

You can find details of your distributor on your bill, on your retailer's website or at www.energy.vic.gov.au: [Find your energy distributor](#)

AusNet Services covers Gippsland.

How much compensation is payable?

The type and amount of compensation available varies depending on a range of factors which are set out in the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice, including the number of outage experiences in a calendar year and the amount of time of the unplanned outage. The amounts range between \$40 to \$380.

There are *supply restoration payments* available if a customer experiences 18 hours or more of unplanned *sustained interruptions* per year.

Major event day payments are probably most relevant to the 13 February 2024 storm event in Gippsland.

A 'major event day' is a term used to measure abnormal performance in supply reliability that is caused by events outside the distributors control such as extreme weather and storms.

A payment of \$90 is available if a customer experiences an unplanned sustained interruption of more than 12 hours on a major event day.

Any supply restoration and low reliability payments do not include any period of interruption on a major event day.

How do you claim?

You do not need to make a claim for a GSL payment. The payments are made automatically.

They are paid by the distributor to your retailer and then applied as a credit to your electricity bill.

An Anglicare Victoria Program in partnership with the local community

When will the GSL payment be made?

The Electricity Distribution Code of Practice requires distributors to make the GSL payment within a certain timeframe depending on the type of payments.

For a *supply restoration or low reliability payment*: within 60 business days following the completion of the quarter the customer became eligible for the payment.

For a *major event day payment*: within 60 business days of the major event day.

It is important for customers to check their next bill to ensure that the credit has been applied to their bill.

Further information is available at: [Claims \(ausnetservices.com.au\)](https://ausnetservices.com.au)

Food spoilage

One of the most common questions asked after a sustained power outage is: **Can I claim compensation for lost food?**

Food in fridges and freezers can be spoiled as a result of the power outage.

Unfortunately, compensation payable by the distributor is often limited to GSL payments and compensation for damage to equipment of property if it is caused by a voltage variation event. It does not include food and you are unlikely to be successful if you put in a claim for food spoilage with your distributor.

For individuals, your home and contents policy may include food spoilage cover. Businesses should check their business interruption insurance.

Check your insurance policy and the schedule to the policy.

If you're unsure whether you're covered for food spoilage, speak with your insurer.

You can also obtain advice about insurance from:

- Consumer Action Law Centre Ph: 03 9670 5088 or www.calc.org.au
- Gippsland Community Legal Service Ph: 1800 004 402 or www.gcls.com.au
- Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA) Ph: 1800 931 678 or www.afca.org.au

Prolonged Power Outage Payment

If you are without power for at least seven (7) days as a result of the storm event on 13 February 2024, you may be eligible for a Prolonged Power Outage Payment. This is a Victorian and Australian Government payment.

Payments are available to households and small businesses for up to three (3) weeks.

Eligible households (residential customers) that remain without power as of 12:01am Tuesday 20 February 2024, can receive a payment of \$1,920.00 per week.

For small businesses (those with a Victorian payroll less than \$10 million a year) who are affected, payments of \$2,927 per week will be made.

Eligible households and businesses will be notified by the distributor and funding will be allocated through a payment application process.

For more information, contact your distributor or go to: [Power outages \(energy.vic.gov.au\)](https://energy.vic.gov.au)

Emergency Relief Payments

You may be eligible for a relief payment if your principal place of residence is in an evacuation warning area, or the fires or storms have damaged your home, and you have unmet immediate relief needs.

For more information, call the Emergency Relief Hotline on 1800 560 760.