

Have you experienced a voltage variation or power surge?

Here's how to make a claim

→ *Unauthorised voltage variations happen when the electricity supplied to a property is outside the voltage limits allowed under the Electricity Distribution Code. This fact sheet explains the claims process for when this occurs.*

Basics

An unauthorised **voltage variation** occurs when the supply voltage in the power lines goes above or below the standard voltage range.

Types of voltage variations include:

- **Power surges:** a sudden spike in voltage, *significantly* higher than the standard range.
- **Brownouts:** relate to a low voltage, when the amount of electricity flowing to your home is below a standard range.

What cases them to happen?

Unauthorised voltage variations can happen for a number of reasons, such as equipment failure, lightning, vehicles hitting power poles, or other objects interfering with overhead electrical wires (such as tree branches or animals).

Grid changes over time can also lead to unauthorised voltage variations. In recent times, localised areas with a high uptake of rooftop solar panels have been known to experience increased network voltages as electricity is fed back into the grid, and this may cause variations.

Brownouts are often caused by power grid or power plant problems.

What are the consequences?

Voltage variations can cause damage to equipment and appliances. Generally speaking, if your property is damaged as a result of this, your electricity *distributor* is expected to compensate you.

Compensation

Some of the rules for compensation are set out in the [Electricity Industry Guideline No.11 – Voltage Variation Compensation \(Guideline\)](#).

The claims process

How do I make a claim about damage caused by a voltage variation?

The claim is made with your *distributor*. You will need to submit a claim form (usually found on their website). Call them if you need help finding this.

Victorian distributors are:

- AusNet Services
- CitiPower
- Jemena
- Powercor
- United Energy

If you are unsure who your distributor is you can find this on your bill, or by searching your address on the Victorian Government website at:

energy.vic.gov.au/electricity/electricity-distributors

What does the claims process involve?

- You will usually have to *prove* the loss or damage has taken place – and *show* the link between the loss or damage and the distributor.
- Distributors can request evidence that the damage to the property was caused by an electrical event – customers may need to have their items inspected by an expert.
- Distributors also have the right to arrange inspections of the property to confirm the damage.

Remember to keep damaged appliances or equipment and all relevant documentation until the claims process has been completed.

Food loss:

If your fridge is damaged as a result of the variation, you **may** be able to claim for food loss. Keep records or proof of the food items lost (such as photographs, itemised lists, receipts).

What is not covered by the guideline?

You will need your National Metering Identifier (NMI) and the serial number of your electricity meter to create an account. This information can be found on your electricity bill.

A distributor doesn't have to pay compensation if:

- The loss or damage isn't directly related to the voltage variation.
- You have already claimed the items through insurance or have started court proceedings.

If you are a business customer:

- You have not taken reasonable precautions (for example, by having insurance and surge protection devices installed) to minimise the risk of loss or damage to your business – this is outlined in the Guideline and [Electricity Distribution Code](#).
- Your business consumes over 160 megawatt hours in a year.

While the above list may exclude the claim under the Guideline, you may still have a valid claim under other laws.

POWER OUTAGES:

While we understand that power outages can be inconvenient, they are not an event that usually attracts compensation (a continuous supply of electricity is not guaranteed).

However, in Victoria, **Guaranteed Service Level (GSL)** payments apply to customers who experience frequent sustained or intermittent supply interruptions. The Victorian Government has more information at energy.vic.gov.au/safety-and-emergencies/power-outages/customer-compensation.

Is insurance better?

Old-for-old, not new-for-old.

If any compensation is paid, this will be 'old-for-old' (usually the current market value) rather than the full replacement cost for new appliances or equipment.

Distributors also have the right to have items repaired, and will sometimes choose this option if it is cost-effective.

Amounts paid by distributors for claimed items are usually lower than the replacement cost for a new item, so it may be best to try and claim against your insurance policy if this results in 'new-for-old' replacement payments.



How can EWOV help?

If you can't sort out the problem with your electricity distributor directly, contact EWOV for assistance.

EWOV will investigate each claim on its individual merit, and the outcome will depend on the circumstances of the case.

Customers will need to provide us with information to support the claim. EWOV will also obtain information about the claims process and the unauthorised voltage variation events from the distributor.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Online: ewov.com.au
Freecall: 1800 500 509
Email: ewovinfo@ewov.com.au

Post: GPO Box 469, Melbourne, Victoria 3001
Translating and Interpreting Service: 131 450
National Relay Service: 133 677