

Electrical Safety for homes in fire affected communities

Safety is paramount when dealing with bushfires and bushfire recovery. In 2019-20 the bushfires have burned over 1.4 million hectares across Victoria, tragically claiming lives, destroyed homes and other property.

After first checking with local emergency services to ensure it's safe to return to their property, it's important returning residents and homeowners understand the potential safety risks even for homes spared the worst of the fires. Any home that has been exposed to fire may have damage to wiring that may not be immediately apparent.

MEA is endeavouring to support all those requiring help but may not be able to provide all the information needed.

My property has no power

If your property has had a loss of power, you may require an electrical inspection and test for electrical safety by a qualified and licensed electrical contractor prior to the power supply being restored. MEA can assist you with accessing an electrical contractor to perform this necessary work.

Simply register your details and we will arrange for a qualified and insured electrical contractor to contact you:

- Call our toll-free hotline: 1300 889 198 or
- Visit our website masterelectricians.com.au/bushfires to register your contact details.

Where access to your property exists and you have an expected delay for the network power being restored, you can install a generator as an interim option.

- If a stand-alone generator can be connected to your home, an electrical contractor will be legally required to perform this work.
- If you have an existing generator system, an electrical contractor should be consulted prior to use.

In preparation for the resumption of power supply to your property (and to facilitate the connection process with your electrical network provider), we recommend that an electrical contractor perform a safety check on your electrical installation.

My property has power

If you have returned to your property and the power supply is available, please follow these steps before turning on your electricity:

- Check your meter box or switchboard for any information or documents left by your electrical network provider. It may contain additional safety instructions.
- Complete a visual inspection of your property for signs of heat damage caused by fire debris. If you are concerned or unsure, engage an electrical contractor to perform a safety check.

Additional advice and materials are available at:

- masterelectricians.com.au/bushfires
- esv.vic.gov.au/safety-education/bushfire-and-powerline-safety/bushfire-safety-advice

Residents of eastern Victorian and outer northern and eastern suburbs of Melbourne

Residents are advised to monitor the Ausnet website or Facebook page for updates on when your region will be re-supplied with power.

- Web ausnetservices.com.au/Misc-Pages/Bushfire-Community-Support
- Facebook facebook.com/AusNet.Services.Energy

What to look for when completing a visual inspection of your property

- Heat damaged cables may be in contact with metal parts of buildings (roofs, gutters, door/window frames, antennas, building frames, shipping containers). This may be an ongoing safety concern.
- Electrical equipment, powerlines and cabling will not look as you would expect following bush fire damage
- Fallen power cables on your property that may not have been reported to the supplying authority
- Solar panels, batteries and cables to your power converter may still be producing voltage, presenting a potential risk of further fire or electric shock if affected by bush fire damage
- External electrical equipment not directly attached to the home (water pumps, powered septic tanks, external sheds).

Electrical safety awareness

All electrical work must be performed by a licensed electrical contractor

- So called 'temporary work' could be unsafe. All repairs or short-term wiring must comply with electricity rules. There is no dispensation given under disaster conditions.
- Ensure the correct type of generator is used when an alternative supply is required to be connected to a home. Consult your licensed electrical contractor.
- Banned and dangerous items. 'Suicide leads' **MUST NOT** be used to connect a generator to a home or shed by plugging into a standard power point.
- Long unprotected extension leads run across the ground to supply power for bore pumps, septic systems, sheds and other outbuildings need to be of the correct size and minimum length. Leads could be damaged by excessive power consumption. White or orange installation cables with a plug and socket connected cannot be used instead of flexible leads.

Visit the ESV website for additional safety advice:

- esv.vic.gov.au/safety-education/bushfire-and-powerline-safety/bushfire-safety-advice