

Power outages

Storms, floods, heavy snow, slips, fallen trees, lightning strikes on transformers, washed out bridges, and even vehicles hitting poles can all cause power outages.

Occasionally major faults at substations or with transmission lines some distance away can cut power and may take considerable time to repair.

What will a power outage mean?

- No electric fences: The stock may push through boundary fences and stray onto roads, unsafe areas on the property, winter crops or silage paddocks etc.
- No pumps: Access to clean water is a priority for stock and humans. Water contaminated with silt, ash, etc can be toxic to stock, so troughs may need to be emptied and cleaned. Storm water will accumulate if drainage pump don't operate?
- No milking: Cows can tolerate going for extended periods without milking, but it is best to avoid delays if possible. See the section on [Missed Milkings](#).
- No refrigeration: If milk already in the vat cannot be cooled to the required temperature you may have to use an emergency disposal method. See the section on [Missed Milkings](#).
- No hot water: So milking machine cleaning and other operations may have to be changed
- No cooking or heating at any houses on the property: unless you have a standby generator
- A generator large enough to power the milking machine and ancillary equipment is expensive, but may be a good investment if your property is prone to flooding, snow or other causes of power outages. Small generators that power domestic appliances or small pumps start at around \$500. Something large enough to run the dairy including refrigeration could be around \$30,000. Generators can be hired from hire centres.

Alternatives for cooking and heating

A gas oven or barbecue to provide heating and hot water will be a major advantage in a power outage. A chip heater or fireplace can also be useful for warmth, hot water, drying clothes etc.

What to do

- Check that family and staff are safe and that they know there is a power cut
- Phone a neighbour to see if they have power. Remember, cordless phones will not work in a power outage, so use a standard phone or cellphone
- If the neighbour has power, the fault may be on your property - perhaps a fallen tree. A quick check for obvious problems before phoning the power company could pinpoint the location and save considerable time. Do not handle fallen cables
- Always phone the power company, even if your neighbours have already phoned. The company may not realise that your power supply is out too. Also, if there is a widespread fault they will probably have an automated message telling you how long it will be before it is fixed

- If the power outage is likely to be prolonged, look at ongoing ways of containing stock and providing feed and water. Do you have generators? Should you hire one? If yes, do it right away.

No Phone?

Where cellphone coverage is available they can provide a great back-up to landlines. However, sometimes both the landline and cellular networks are out of commission.

What to do

- Check the obvious things first - connections etc. Use a corded phone if there is a power cut
- Use your cellphone to contact the phone company. For Spark, call 120. If your cellphone is with another company you can still contact Spark on 0800-800-123. Be prepared to wait - the fault service may be busy
- It may not be possible for someone else to report the fault on your behalf. Phone companies may insist on speaking to the phone line owner just so that they can warn you that if there is a simple fault in your house you may have to pay a callout fee. This can be incredibly inconvenient and frustrating
- Make sure you have a car (cigarette lighter socket) charger for your cellphone so that you can recharge it as required from your vehicles or tractor
- If the cellular network is down it is likely that there are widespread problems. Listen to the local radio for information, and consider a trip to the nearest town if that is feasible
- Communication with family and staff by two-way radio may be an option.

More info



Adverse Events

Information to help you prepare your business for adverse events and overcome them.