

# Storm safety

Preparation management for before, during and after storms, cyclones and floods



Residents of storm-affected areas should take precautions to prevent electrocution or injuries from electricity before, during and after storms, cyclones or floods.

## Prepare

- ✓ Prepare an emergency plan and prepare for evacuation.
- ✓ Prepare an emergency kit.
- ✓ Prepare your home – the best time to do this is before the storm.

For detailed information go to:

[www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/beprepared.asp](http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/beprepared.asp).

## Before

- ✓ Have a licensed electrical contractor install a safety switch, or check that your home's installed safety switch works.
- ✓ Find out how and where to turn off your power, gas and water supply.
- ✓ Check all electrical equipment (e.g. leads, extension leads and power boards), including generators, are in good working order.
- ✓ Buy extra batteries for torches and radios and check that these appliances work.
- ✓ Unplug any appliance or electrical equipment that does not need to be used and pack it away in a safe place.
- ✓ Unplug outside TV or radio aerials.



## During

- ✓ When storm conditions approach, switch off and unplug all electrical equipment.
- ✓ If power has been lost in your area, turn off power points and unplug electrical equipment to minimise harm, damage and inconvenience.
- ✓ Don't use a fixed telephone during a thunderstorm – it may deliver an electric shock.
- ✓ Listen to a battery powered radio for storm updates.
- ✓ In the event of floods, place electrical equipment as high off the ground as possible.
- ✓ If you are driving – stop well away from powerlines, trees and watercourses. Stay in your vehicle, unless it is not safe (e.g. a vehicle fire).



## After

- ✓ Continue to listen to your local radio station for official warnings and advice.
- ✓ If your incoming power from the street has come down (aerial) or your underground service pillar has been storm damaged, contact your local electricity distribution entity and keep clear of fallen or damaged powerlines.
- ✓ To check the electrical safety of the rest of your property (i.e. the house and garage wiring etc) call a licensed electrical contractor to inspect and carry out verification tests on your switchboard, wiring, equipment and appliances. Ask for a certificate of test.



## Outside

- If you are required to leave your home dress appropriately and wear sturdy enclosed shoes.
- Keep clear of trailing electrical cables, foil insulation or other conductive material that may be lying around your house – they may be carrying an electrical current.
- Be aware of electrical signs, street lights and other metal electrical items on the street as they may be damaged and carrying an electrical current.

## Powerlines

- Fallen powerlines are an electrical risk. Take care during or after storms for fallen or damaged lines.
- Fallen powerlines can be hard to see – especially at night. Stay well away from them and warn others to do the same.
- Report any fallen lines to the emergency services or the local electricity distribution entity.

## House switchboards

- Stay away from switchboards, and warn others to do the same, if they are damaged by water, fire or if lightning is close.
- If mains power is lost report this to the local electricity distribution entity.

## Asbestos

- With damage to buildings in cyclone-hit areas it is highly likely there will be asbestos-containing materials among the debris.
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has published a fact sheet called *How to handle asbestos safely after a storm* which is available at: [www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/subjects/asbestos](http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/subjects/asbestos)

## Generators

- Portable generators should only be used to power essential equipment, such as fridges.
- Only connect your generator to your house if you have had an electrical contractor fit a proper generator change-over switch with the appropriate generator socket.

- Do not connect your generator to your house using a power point on a power circuit or any other connection point. This is illegal and dangerous. This could energise the powerlines and cause an electric shock to anyone coming into contact with them. Also, plugging the generator into your house circuit could cause the generator to fail and cause a fire, or damage the generator and circuits.
- Ensure all leads used to connect your generator are in good working condition, i.e. no damage to plugs or lead and no exposed wires.
- Use power boards with an overload cut-out switch.
- Place leads and power boards so they will not be affected by mechanical damage (e.g. stepped on, tripping, etc), flooding, or fire (e.g. coiled leads, overload).
- Be aware of risks including electrocution and poisoning/suffocation from carbon monoxide exhaust gases.
- Always run the generator outdoors or in a well-ventilated area, don't exceed the generator's load rating and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## Electrical appliances and equipment

- Have a licensed electrical contractor check any electrical appliances or equipment you suspect has been submerged or damaged.

## Electrical work

- Do not do your own electrical work at any time, under any circumstances. This could result in life-threatening injuries.

For further information on electrical safety and storms, and general electrical safety, contact:

- Ergon Energy on 13 10 46
- Energex on 13 12 53
- Country Energy on 13 23 56
- The Electrical Safety Office on 1300 650 662.

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