



Solar systems and power outages

Do solar systems work during power outages?

Solar systems without batteries will NOT work during a power outage on the grid. This fact sheet explains why and discusses some of the alternative ways you can make sure you have power whenever you need it.

Why won't it work?

There are usually two reasons:

1. During a power outage, your solar system inverter will shut off power sources, such as solar, to protect the electrical equipment & appliances in your home or business. Your electrical equipment & appliances need a steady power supply to work properly or they may get damaged. If you have solar panels, the power flowing to your home or business changes depending on the amount of sunlight that day. Your appliances cannot run with power stopping and starting, so your solar panels work with the grid to provide a stable flow of power. If that stability is not there – for example, during a power outage – your solar system shuts down.
2. We send our crews out to investigate and repair any faults and get the power back on. If a solar system is still generating power, this can put their safety at risk.

By law, solar systems have inverters that sense if you are connected to the network. Whenever grid power is down, they automatically shut down to protect people and property.

What can I do?

This depends on your situation and electricity requirements. Here are some things you can install:

- Small fuel generator – for example, to run a water pump in a rural situation.
- Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) device – this is like a battery with smart controls. Suitable for small devices such as computers or lights.
- Battery storage systems – these can provide the necessary backup power supply needed to run some or all of your household appliances.

There are three types of battery storage systems:

1. **No backup power:** the battery only works when the grid is available, similar to solar systems
2. **Limited backup power:** the battery is usually wired up to power a single circuit supplying specific loads (eg fridge, lights, water pump)
3. **Full backup power:** the battery can power the whole house (for the time of its storage capacity)

It's important to research the different products currently available to find one that meets your needs.

You must contact a registered electrician for advice on which option is right for you.

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Fact sheet

