

A consumer's guide for floods and electricity in the home or business

This fact sheet has been developed by the National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) of Australia to inform you of the dangers placed on your electrical wiring and equipment in your home or business. This will guide you in what is required to be checked by a licenced electrical contractor when testing your installation after a flood has been through your property.

Floods and electricity

Before the flood

- Before flood levels rise, ensure that you turn off your main switch. This will turn the power off to your installation, helping minimise risk and damage to your property and yourself.
- If you have solar turn the power off to it as per the shutdown procedure.
- If you have a battery backup system also turn off as per the shutdown procedure.
- Remove any portable appliances.
- Place major appliances above the expected high water flood level if possible or remove from the area.
- NEVER stay in a flood affected area when the power is on.
- Evacuate as soon as possible prior to the flood.

During the flood

- Keep clear of all powerlines.
- Do not drive, operate a boat, or walk over downed powerlines.
- Do not touch any downed powerlines.
- If you encounter downed powerlines, contact your electricity supply authority.
- Follow the advice from your electricity supply authority.

After the flood

- Contact your insurer.
- Contact a **licenced NECA member electrical contractor** to check and test your flood affected installation.
- Your electrician will need to provide you with written proof of the tests and any repairs completed.
- You need this proof of testing for the insurance company and the electricity distributor.
- Ensure that the electrician you employ is licenced and insured.
- Be aware that solar and battery systems can still produce electricity even with the inverter turned off. This includes the panels and the DC wiring to the inverter. Get your solar system or battery system checked by an electrician.
- Metal roofs, downpipes and metallic roof sarking may become live. Get the electrician to check before you touch.

Your **licenced NECA member electrical contractor** can provide you with a detailed written document to advise you of what is faulty once the flood waters have receded. This document is based on AS/NZS 3019:2007 Electrical Installations - Periodic Verification. This electrical standard gives electricians advice so far as is reasonably practical on how to verify by inspection and or testing to determine if the installation is safe to be used.

Once your installation has dried out, engage a licenced electrical contractor to test and visually inspect your wiring, power points, light fittings, light switches, switchboard, and any appliances. Your electricity distributor will not allow the power to be reconnected until proof of testing has been completed. NECA provide their member electrical contractors with a document as proof of verification that your installation is safe to connect. It will also provide you with information of what needs repairing and what isn't safe.

What can you do before the electricity supply is reconnected ?

- Contact your electricity distributor to see if the electricity network is on. This is your responsibility and to advise the electrician that you employ, to check your installation.
- You can use a generator to provide electricity via an extension lead.
- Make sure that your generator is installed outside in a well-ventilated area.
- Keep the generator away from doorways where carbon monoxide can build up in lower levels of buildings.
- Make sure that the generator you use has a safety switch installed and the extension lead is fit for purpose.
- Do not connect your generator to your electrical installation. This can cause safety problems for the electricity distributor.
- Do not use a death lead; that is a lead with a male plug on both ends.
- Ensure that the lead has a one male plug and one female socket to power your equipment.
- Allow your premise to dry out as much as you can.
- Remove any obstacles to allow easy access for the electrician when completing their tests.

Your electrical contractor will look for faulty power points, light switches, light fittings, portable appliances, fixed appliances such as air conditioners, pool pumps, hot water systems, non-submersible water pumps, electrical wiring, and the circuit breakers and safety switches in your switchboard.

FAQs

It is recommended that any faulty equipment or wiring should be replaced. Why?

There is the risk that in time with normal use, the affected equipment can melt or catch fire.

Are there costs associated with this work?

Yes, you will have to pay the electrician. However it may be covered by your insurance or government funding.