



## Safety advice

In this section you will find advice and information on using energy safely in and around your home. You will also find information on how to prepare for storms and blackouts and what to do in an emergency.

### Natural gas safety

Gas is widely used for cooking and heating. It is naturally odourless, but a distinctive smell is added for easy detection of gas leaks. As long as appliances bear the Australian Gas Association (AGA) approved logo, are correctly installed and properly maintained, you will find gas a safe and economical fuel to use in your home.

For gas to provide heat, it must burn, so fire-related precautions are the prime safety consideration. Natural gas is non-toxic and normally clean burning, but if inhaled in concentration, it can cause asphyxiation.

See the links below for more information on the safe use of gas energy in your home.

### Gas leaks and shortages

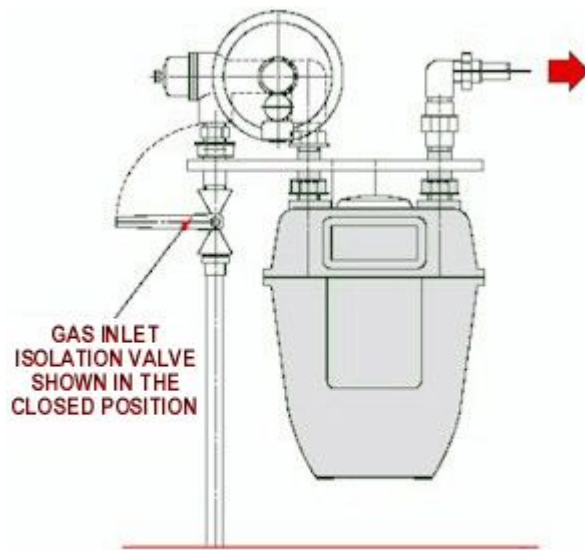
#### If you smell gas indoors:

- Do not look for a gas leak with a flame.
- Check whether gas cooker burners have been left on and unlit, or if a gas outlet socket has not sealed. Turn the burner knob off and wait until you can no longer smell gas before trying to use any appliance again.
- Open doors and windows.
- Do not operate power or light switches or turn on electrical appliances as these may cause a spark which may start a fire.
- If stove burners or appliances do not seem to be the cause, turn off the gas at the meter.
- Call a licensed gas fitter.



**If you smell gas outdoors:**

- Turn off the gas supply at the meter. (see diagram below)
- Call AGL immediately on:
  - NSW 131 909
  - VIC 132 771
  - SA (Origin Energy) 1800 808 526



**TYPICAL ARRANGEMENT OF A DOMESTIC GAS METER SET**

**Gas Shortages and Supply Difficulties**

Report the problem immediately by calling,

- NSW 131 909
- VIC 132 771
- SA 1800 808 526



## Outdoor Safety

### Powerlines

- Never climb electrical towers or poles, or enter electrical substations.
- If planting trees or shrubs, make sure they are well clear of powerlines. Do not trim trees around powerlines yourself. If they are street trees, contact your local council. If they are trees on your property, contact an authorised tree trimmer.
- Don't climb trees near powerlines.
- Fly kites and model aeroplanes well away from powerlines. If an object does become entangled, do not try to retrieve it, call your electricity distributor.

### Appliances

- Don't leave appliances or cords outdoors where they may be rained on or dampened by watering systems.
- Electric lawnmowers, trimmers and power tools used outdoors are best connected to a powerpoint protected by a fixed or portable safety switch.

### Street lighting

- Street lighting is important to everyone. If you see a broken street light, please report it on the appropriate emergency service line so that it can be repaired as soon as possible.
- If you notice faulty street lights or acts of vandalism to lights, substations or transmission towers, please report it on the appropriate emergency service line.

## Storms and blackouts

Storms can cause damage to buildings, trees and powerlines which can create dangerous situations and result in power failures.

### Be prepared

- Keep trees trimmed. If trees branches are overhanging powerlines, contact an authorised tree trimmer.
- Make sure your house is maintained and weatherproof. Replace broken roof tiles, keep gutters clean and fix leaks.
- Make sure you know how to turn off your electrical mains switch and your gas supply at the meter.
- Know the operating requirements of gas equipment. During a blackout, appliances with electric ignitions will not work because electricity is needed to ignite the natural gas.
- Know how to manually open and close any electric garage doors or security gates.
- Have a battery operated torch and radio on hand to listen to community announcements about when power will be restored.
- If you have a cordless phone, be aware that these will not work during a power failure. Have an old style phone (one which only plugs into the phone line), or a mobile phone on hand in case of emergencies.
- Do not use phones during electrical storms.



### **What to do during a storm**

- Turn off and unplug sensitive appliances such as computers, stereos and televisions.
- Do not go near fallen wires - these may still be live.
- Report fallen powerlines or trees.

### **What to do during a blackout**

- Switch off all appliances, but leave one light switch on so you will know when power is restored.
- Unplug sensitive equipment such as computers, televisions and stereo equipment.
- Contact your electricity distributor for updates on when power will be restored. See the numbers on our [emergency service page](#).

## **Electrical safety**

Electricity is an essential part of our daily lives and, if used sensibly, it is a safe and economical energy source.

All electrical work must be carried out by licensed electricians. See the links below for information on using electricity safely in and around your home.

### **Electricity and water**

Water conducts electricity, so use extra care when using electrical appliances near water or in damp areas.

- Never touch appliances, switches, power points or lights with wet hands or a damp wash cloth.
- Never use a portable electric heater in the bathroom.
- Never leave portable electrical appliances like hair dryers and shavers unattended near a basin, sink or bath - children have been killed by pulling appliances into the water, even though they were switched off.
- Never use portable electrical appliances or extension cords close to a pool or pond - they could be splashed or fall into the water.
- If an appliance does get wet, switch it off at the power point, unplug it, dry it out and have it checked by a licensed electrical contractor.
- Never wash or immerse appliances in water unless manufacturer's instructions allow it. Using appliances safely



## **Using and maintaining appliances**

- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions on the use and maintenance of your electrical appliances. Never work on or interfere with electrical wiring or equipment. Use only a licensed electrician for installations and repairs.
- If you get a tingle or shock from an appliance, switch it off at the power supply and disconnect it. Contact your electrical supplier.
- Faulty equipment is a major cause of electrical fatalities, so check regularly for damage.
- Before cleaning a portable electrical appliance, switch it off at the power point and unplug it. If food is stuck inside your toaster, switch it off at the power point and unplug it before attempting to clear the blockage.
- Always use the correct fuse wire, fuse cartridge or plug-in circuit breaker, to avoid overloads which might cause a fire - a repeatedly blowing fuse signals a fault which should be checked by a licensed electrical contractor.

## **Electric heaters**

- Always keep flammable materials like bedding, curtains, furnishings, clothes and newspapers clear of all heaters, especially heaters on a time switch.
- Never drape anything on or over an electric heater.
- Keep portable radiators clear of curtains and tablecloths

## **Clothes dryers**

- Clean the lint filter before every load. A build up of lint can cause dryers to overheat and ignite. This also increases efficiency, reducing the cost and time required to dry your washing loads.

## **Electric blankets**

- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Don't leave electric blankets on for long periods. Electric blankets should be used to warm your bed and then switched off once you get in.
- Never use an electric blanket with a water bed.
- Never use an electric blanket when it's wet. Incontinent people should not use electric blankets.
- Never place a baby on an electric blanket - they can dehydrate and get burns at fairly low temperatures.
- Never wash or dry clean an electric blanket unless the manufacturer's instructions indicate that it is a "washable" type which can be laundered - always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Regularly inspect your blankets for wear or damage.
- If you find any signs of damage, or if an electric blanket is more than 5 years old, have it checked by the manufacturer.



## **Cords and powerpoints**

Electric shocks can be caused by damaged electrical cords and plugs and improper use of powerboards.

- Keep extension cords away from hot objects - appliances like toasters and irons can burn through the cord's insulation.
- Check electrical cords and plugs regularly for fraying or other damage and replace if necessary. Most appliance repairers only charge a nominal fee to replace cords/leads on irons and toasters.
- Don't place cords under rugs where they can be walked on.
- Don't overload powerpoints - most powerpoints are designed for 2,400Watts (10amps)
- Don't use more than one double adaptor per powerpoint - use a powerboard with overload protection instead.
- Put safety covers on unused powerpoints and don't let children play around powerpoints.

## **Fuses, circuit breakers and safety switches**

### **Fuses and circuit breakers**

Fuses and circuit breakers are designed to interrupt excess current which can overload the electrical wires in your home. These overloads are often caused by faulty appliances. When an overload occurs, the fuse melts or the circuit breaker trips before the wires can overheat, which reduces the risk of fire.

- Always replace a blown fuse with the correct fuse wire. Never use fuse wire that is heavier than the recommended gauge. Never use any other type metal or wire.
- If fuses keeps blowing, or a circuit breaker keeps tripping, check that your appliances are not faulty.
- If fuses continue to blow, or circuit breakers continue to trip after appliances are unplugged, there could be a problem with your wiring. Contact a licensed electrician immediately.

### **Safety switches**

Safety switches look similar to circuit breakers, but they provide extra protection from electric shock. Safety switches monitor the flow of electricity and if any irregularity is detected, the electricity supply is immediately cut off.

Homes with children or backyard workshops should consider installing safety switches to reduce the risk of electrical accidents. New homes are required to have safety switches installed. Licensed electrical contractors can install safety switches in older homes at a reasonable cost. You can also purchase portable safety switches for appliances and extension cords.



It is recommended that safety switches are used for:

- outdoor electrical equipment and lighting
- Christmas lighting
- portable appliances, power tools and extension leads