

Helping users of **life support equipment** prepare for power outages



Conversation starter guide

This guide is for anyone supporting someone who relies on life support equipment at home including:

- Family, carers and support people
- Health professionals (doctors, nurses, specialists)
- Equipment providers and community workers (Independent Living Specialists, Pharmacists)

These conversations can feel challenging – this guide is designed help you to take that first step.

You don't need to have all the answers. Your role is to start the conversation which can help save a life. Planning for power outages is an essential part of good health care.



Ensure users of life support equipment at home are registered as a Life Support Customer with their energy retailer.

Find the Power Outage checklist at lifesupport.poweroutageplan.com.au and plan for the person you're assisting. If possible help them complete both documents.



Remember!

Just because you're a registered life support customer your electricity supply is not guaranteed.

Why your conversations matter

Power outages can be dangerous for people who rely on electricity for essential medical equipment in the home. Our electricity networks are among the most reliable in the world, however power outages can still happen due to severe weather, car accidents, damage to equipment or the need to switch off power to carry out maintenance.

Many people using life support equipment in the home don't realise they need a power outage plan and wrongly believe their electricity supply is guaranteed. A calm, supportive conversation can be the first step in helping someone feel more confident about what to do next.

Before you start, remember:

- ☐ Keep things simple, focus on starting the conversation. You don't need to solve everything immediately.
- ☐ Use friendly, empowering language: 'Let's chat about how you can stay safe if the power ever goes out.'
- ☐ Don't assume others have had this conversation with them.
- ☐ Be upfront about the risks of power outages using calm, supportive language, explain that equipment relies on electricity and planning ahead is important.
- ☐ Avoid language that is frightening, overwhelming or overly clinical.
- ☐ Be careful not to overload with too much new information at once.
- ☐ Emphasise that a regularly reviewed power outage plan is essential for safety and peace of mind.

Conversation starter guide

Conversation starters

- ☐ Would it be okay if we talked about what to do if the power goes out?
- ☐ Have you ever made a plan for a power outage?

Important questions to ask

- ☐ **Is your electricity retailer aware you use life support equipment?** If no, you can contact them using the number on your bill. They'll guide you through registering as a life support customer.
- ☐ **Have you started or created a power outage plan?**

No It's simple to complete, visit lifesupport.poweroutageplan.com.au to download a checklist and plan.

Yes That's great to hear, when did you last review it? Visit lifesupport.poweroutageplan.com.au to see if there's anything else you might need to add to your power outage plan.

- ☐ **Who can help you complete the checklist and plan?**
- ☐ **Does your equipment have a battery backup?** It's important to know how long your battery will last. This will form part of your plan. Even if your equipment has a backup battery, it's important to have a plan in place, as the power may stay out beyond the battery life.
- ☐ **Are you aware that you need to prepare for both planned and unplanned outages?**
 - Planned: your distributor is planning works in the area and needs to turn the power off for a limited duration – they will provide at least 4 days' notice.
 - Unplanned: when something unexpected cuts the power, such as a weather event.
- ☐ **Would you like help getting started with a power outage plan?**

You don't need to complete the plan together, your role may simply be to help start the conversation and guide next steps.



Before you finish

- ☐ Ask if anything feels unclear or if there is anything further they want to discuss?
- ☐ Ask how they are feeling about the conversation, acknowledging that it can be overwhelming.
- ☐ Encourage them to involve family, carers or others they trust.
- ☐ Suggest reviewing and updating the plan annually or when health needs or equipment changes.

Helpful resources

Visit lifesupport.poweroutageplan.com.au to access the Power Outage Checklist and Plan you can take away and complete over time.

Want to hear more stories from people who have developed their own Power Outage Plans? Visit lifesupport.poweroutageplan.com.au/#stories

Concessions

- ☐ **Have you considered exploring whether you're eligible for any concessions to help with your electricity or water costs?** Visit energy.gov.au to find out more.

Other assistance available

Once registered as a Life Support customer, you can access:

- ☐ Priority phone support during outages
- ☐ Text alerts before planned outages
- ☐ Text alerts prior to severe weather to help you prepare for possible outages

Examples of life support equipment

- an oxygen concentrator
- intermittent peritoneal dialysis machine
- a kidney dialysis machine
- CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine
- crigler najjar syndrome phototherapy equipment
- a ventilator for life support
- any other equipment that a doctor says is needed for life support



Scan the QR code or visit: lifesupport.poweroutageplan.com.au