

Customers put first in update to state's electricity distribution code

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Electricity and gas

Victorians will have the option of getting a text message or an email instead of a letter notifying them about planned outages in changes to the state's [electricity distribution code](#).

The changes announced by the Victorian energy regulator today mean electricity distributors will have to provide customers with more information about the purpose of planned outages.

Essential Services Commission energy director Sarah McDowell said the changes respond to changing expectations of Victorians.

"Customers will be able to nominate their preferred contact method to be notified about planned outages via text or email meaning they can be better prepared," she said.

Ms McDowell says the amount Victorians are paid when the power goes out unexpectedly or too often have also been boosted.

"Payments for unplanned outages have all increased between \$10 and \$20 and range from \$40 for momentary interruptions to \$380 for 20 sustained unplanned interruptions in a year.

From 1 July next year, payments will also be made once a quarter instead of annually to recognise the inconvenience of poor service in a more timely way," she said.

Other changes include:

- improving outage notifications to include a reason e.g. scheduled maintenance or network upgrade
- notifying customers when planned works are cancelled (where possible)
- increasing the data collected by the commission to ensure the code's ongoing relevance.

A final decision updating the code's [technical standards was published in April 2020](#).

The reforms will be phased in over six months from 1 January 2021.

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