

Powercor pays penalty for allegedly failing to notify customers of planned power interruptions

Powercor Australia Ltd has paid \$250,000 in penalties after allegedly failing to notify 162 Victorian customers of a planned power interruption.

Powercor reported to the commission that in March 2021 it failed to provide advance notice to 162 customers on the Bellarine Peninsula of a power outage while carrying out planned maintenance work. One of those customers was registered as requiring life support equipment that relied on electricity supply.

Essential Services Commission chair Kate Symons said distributors must have effective systems in place to manage planned outages and customer notifications.

“Performing maintenance is vital for the ongoing quality of supply, but distributors need to ensure customers are adequately informed of any periods when they will be without power,” she said.

“This ensures customers can make alternative plans and not be suddenly left in the dark without heating or cooling, and, importantly for customers with specific health conditions, their life support equipment.

“Distributors are required to give customers at least four business days written notice of a planned interruption to electricity supply, pursuant to the Electricity Distribution Code.”

The outage occurred between 8:47am and 9:14am on 31 March 2021 in Indented Head. Power was restored to the affected premises after 27 minutes, as Powercor field crews were notified by impacted customers.

Commissioner Symons said, after being notified Powercor rectified the issue quickly by restoring power and deferring the proposed maintenance to a future date.

Editors’ note: The commission can issue penalty notices where it has reason to believe a business has committed an energy industry contravention. Payment of a penalty is not an admission of a contravention of its distribution licence.

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