AusNet

Solar emergency backstop

Thinking about solar?

Residential rooftop solar is an important part of Victoria's move towards a fully renewable energy future. Solar households can gain independence from older energy generators — like coal and oil — and help reduce energy bills.

We're fortunate to have lots of sunshine in Victoria, providing an ideal environment for solar.

Why is this needed?

Due to the increasing amount of solar installed in Victoria, on some mild, sunny days, households are generating and exporting more energy than the grid can handle.

The electricity grid was first built over 100 years ago and only designed to take power from large fossil fuel generators to customer homes - but not back the other way from rooftop solar exports.

Sometimes this causes an unstable electricity supply, which in extreme situations, can lead to outages. The solar emergency backstop mechanism will help us manage the grid to avoid blackouts, ultimately allowing more customers to safely connect solar and support our renewable energy future.

What's changing?

From 1 October 2024, your new or upgraded solar system must be internet-enabled (preferably ethernet rather than Wi-Fi). It must also be connected to, and able to communicate with, our server. This change is a requirement of the Victorian government's new mandate — a mechanism called the solar emergency backstop.

This will allow electricity distribution businesses like AusNet to safely manage solar energy generation during an energy supply emergency. Energy distributors will have the ability to remotely turn down or switch off rooftop solar systems when solar exports are too high to be safely managed. This will only be used as a last resort to avoid widespread power outages.

What do I need to do?

Your authorised solar retailer is responsible for ensuring you have the correct equipment (inverter) connected to your solar panels. You also need to have a reliable internet connection.

We recommend hardwiring an ethernet connection as this is more stable than Wi-Fi. You will be responsible for ensuring that your system always remains connected to the internet.

AusNet

Will the solar emergency backstop affect feed-in tariffs?

If the emergency backstop is activated, your solar system won't feed excess energy into the grid. This means you won't receive income from your solar exports while the backstop is activated.

The Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) expects this will only cost households between $4 and $7 in lost feed-in tariffs per year.

You can minimise this loss by consuming as much of your own solar power as possible.

When will the solar emergency backstop be activated and how will I know?

The Australian Electricity Market Operator (AEMO) will tell us when to activate the emergency backstop, and for how long. They decide this based on when there is too much energy predicted on the grid.

We will publish a banner on our website during an emergency backstop event.

How do I get the best return from my solar installation?

Ask your installer to show you how to monitor your solar generation, consumption and exports. Solar Victoria recommends using your most high energy usage appliances during the day when you're generating solar.

If your system loses communication with AusNet for any reason, your inverter will automatically drop back to the 'default' export limit of 1kW.

We may contact you if we can see that your system has been disconnected from our network, so that you can reconnect and benefit from the full available export.

Make sure your electricity retailer (the company you pay your power bills to) has your current mobile number and email address. They'll pass it onto us so we can send you notifications.

Want to know more?

More information about the solar emergency backstop can be found at:

- **ausnetservices.com.au/solar-emergency-backstop**
- **energy.vic.gov.au**
- **solar.vic.gov.au**

Need to get in touch?

For general enquiries about the solar emergency backstop:

- email solarbackstop@ausnetservices.com.au
- visit our Contact us webpage.