

Protecting Your Business during Voltage Variations

CitiPower and Powercor Australia spends millions of dollars each year maintaining our networks to provide you with a safe and reliable electricity supply. However unusual circumstances can occur and result in voltage variations on our networks. These variations can cause “power surges” or “brown outs” (losing one phase resulting in a partial supply), which can affect your business.

Under certain circumstances you may be eligible to make a claim against CitiPower or Powercor for damage caused during these rare occurrences; however the Victorian electricity regulator, the Essential Services Commission also expects businesses to take reasonable precautions to protect their plant and equipment from voltage variations.

If you make a claim, you will need to outline the precautions you have taken to protect your assets. We expect even small businesses to demonstrate that they have considered options or devices to provide an appropriate level of protection to minimise loss/damage during a voltage variation.

It is also worth noting that CitiPower and Powercor’s compensation guidelines are based on compensating customers for damaged equipment or goods that are of a similar age or functionality. For example, if a claim was made for a five year old computer, we would compensate the claimant for its value at the time of the incident. In view of this, you may want to check the conditions of your insurance policy for items that you may wish to replace with more up to date or advanced products.

Undertaking a risk assessment will help you establish the type of protection you require taking into account the size and nature of your business. We also advise you speak to your local Registered Electrical Contractor or in the case of data back up and Uninterruptable Power Supplies; contact your IT service provider.

The following table can be used as a guideline outlining some of the options you may wish to consider for your business:

Type of Protection	How it Works	Notes
Surge Protector	A device which automatically switches off the power when the voltage rises above a certain level.	These are available as devices which plug into the wall to protect certain appliances or they can be installed at the switchboard to protect appliances on a particular circuit or installation. You will need to contact an electrician for advice on the best solution for your business.
Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS)	A UPS is an appliance which allows a continuous supply of power for a limited period of time so that an appliance can be shut down correctly. It is not suitable for keeping appliances on supply.	This may be of use to businesses heavily reliant on equipment sensitive to voltage variations such as computers. Advice should be sought from IT service providers to help you make an effective choice.

<p>Phase Fail Relays</p>	<p>Produces a similar result to surge protection in that the device automatically shuts down power when the voltage falls below a set limit.</p>	<p>May be a good option for businesses that operate motorised equipment. This device is installed at the switchboard to stop motors from burning out during voltage variations. You will need to contact an electrician for advice on the best solution for your business.</p>
<p>Back up of Data</p>	<p>Copying computer data to a secure site.</p>	<p>Depending on the sensitivity of the data, it should be backed a regularly as possible. Many businesses back up their data on a daily basis.</p>
<p>Back Up Supply/Generator</p>	<p>An appliance which allows a continuous supply of power as an alternative power source.</p>	<p>The size of generators and how they are powered varies. If you choose to use a generator, you would require a Registered Electrical Contractor to install it.</p>
<p>Line Conditioner</p>	<p>A device which regulates the voltage to keep it between set limits.</p>	<p>Seek advice from your electrician.</p>
<p>Emergency Plan</p>	<p>Depending on the nature of your business, an emergency plan could include moving stock or using alternative premises following a voltage variation. Your plan should incorporate elements of a risk assessment.</p>	<p>A plan could include measures to relocate stock, refrigerated transport of perishable goods or using employees to undertake other duties if production is off line.</p>
<p>Adequate Insurance Policy</p>	<p>Your insurance may or may not cover damage from occurrences such as brown outs and surges. Also check if your policy includes 'new for old' coverage if it is important for your business to replace damaged goods with new products.</p>	<p>Check with your insurance provider the best way to cover your premises and assets under these unusual circumstances.</p>

