

Equipment failures after power cuts

This side of the factsheet is about the types of equipment which fail most often, and gives some advice on protecting your equipment.



Some types of equipment are more sensitive than others to changes in the supply voltage. Electronic items which are more sensitive than others are:

- Telephones
- Fax machines
- Clock radios
- Video recorders
- Computers
- Alarm systems.

This is because the internal power supply operates all the time, even when you're not using it.

The constant heat generated in the power supply slowly reduces the ability of the internal parts to withstand voltage variations.

You can protect sensitive equipment from voltage variations by buying a low-cost 'anti-spike' lead or adaptor. You can buy these from electrical shops and DIY stores. The better ones will protect phones and fax machines from the similar variations that can occur in your phone line.

How to get in touch with us

You can contact our

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If you're at home when there's a power cut you can protect your equipment by unplugging it or switching it off at the socket.

Alarm systems need regular maintenance. Old batteries won't power the alarm for as long as newer ones, so you should replace them every five years.

You may like to consider using an uninterruptible power supply, or UPS, if you:

- Work from home, using a PC
- Run a small business which depends on computers or other electronic equipment such as tills.

A UPS can give peace of mind for less than £100. Please ask for our separate factsheet on these devices.

Customers often ask us about electrical equipment that stops working after a power cut. This factsheet explains what can happen, and why we don't pay for such failures.

When the power comes back on after a cut, however short, all the appliances and lights come on together. This can cause a slight variation in the supply voltage. Much the same thing would happen if you turned your main switch off and then on again. No electricity company can control these variations.

The normal voltage in the UK is 230 volts, but it isn't constant. The voltage at your property varies all the time due to customers' use of power and normal operation of the power supply network. We have designed our network to ensure that the voltage usually stays within the allowed range (see the box on the right).

We may supply a voltage outside the range in special circumstances, such as when there is a fault elsewhere on the network and we supply customers from an alternative source of power.

Manufacturers of electrical and electronic equipment know about these variations and design their products to cope with them.

Your equipment meets European Standards if it carries the CE mark.



Because most power cuts are outside our control, we're not liable for any loss or damage. Your home or business insurance may cover you. We're always happy to confirm the details of a power cut if you can claim on your insurance.

In the UK the declared voltage and tolerance for an electricity supply is 230 volts -6%, +10%

This gives an allowed voltage range of 216.2 volts to 253.0 volts.