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## Heatwaves and Energy Supply Explained

As we move into the summer peak electricity demand period, the Australian Energy Council and Energy Networks Australia have released a fact sheet on the potential impacts on the energy system.

In summer the power system is tested on hot days when demand rises. Energy infrastructure is also put under greater stress from bushfires and extreme weather events.

In 2020 energy providers have also had to contend with the added uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to carefully plan and manage maintenance programs and projects.

The Australian Energy Council's Chief Executive, Sarah McNamara, said there had been strong collaboration between the market operator, generators and network providers to ensure summer readiness.

"High maximum demand is driven by hotter days and historically this tends to be hot weekdays and when business and industry are fully operating," she said.

"Despite COVID this year, the biggest risk to the electricity system remains at the end of a run of two or more hot days when demand can spike as we turn to cooling systems.

"Buildings heat up and there can be reduced output due to a range of reasons - the availability of thermal and renewable generation and physical limits to the grid. We also seeing demand spikes in the early evening when output from solar on our rooftops drops with the sun."

Energy Networks Australia CEO, Andrew Dillon said networks were very conscious that losing power even for a short time during a heatwave could cause distress.

"Electricity providers do everything possible to avoid any loss of power, which is why we maintain a schedule of [critical works](#) throughout the year.

"If however, there are electricity supply shortfalls in an extreme heat event, the market operator will order networks to temporarily turn power off (load shed) in in different parts of the grid to secure the power system. When this happens, outages are kept as short as possible."

Mr Dillon encouraged customers to find out which company [distributed electricity to their premises](#) so they could follow them on social media and bookmark their website.

"Only one network business supplies electricity to your house or business, so follow them to get timely information specific to your local area in the event of an outage," Mr Dillon said.

Ms McNamara said individual power station generation units could have unplanned outages from time to time.

"This is normal not just for large plants here in Australia but also overseas, she said. "Power systems have back-up capacity, which is designed to manage a limited number of individual outages.

“AEC members continue to invest to ensure plant availability at peak times.”

You can find your local electricity distributor [here](#).

The fact sheet is available [here](#)

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### **About the Australian Energy Council**

The Council represents 21 major electricity and downstream natural gas businesses operating in the competitive wholesale and retail energy markets. These businesses collectively generate the overwhelming majority of electricity in Australia, sell gas and electricity to over 10 million homes and businesses, and are major investors in renewable energy generation.

### **About Energy Networks Australia**

Energy Networks Australia represents Australia’s electricity transmission and distribution networks and gas distribution networks. Our members provide energy to almost every household and business in Australia.