

**ELECTRICITY  
AUTHORITY**  
TE MANA HIKO



# Health Practitioners' Guide

**Supporting medically dependent consumers  
under the Consumer Care Obligations**

August 2025



# The purpose of this guide

In 2025, the Electricity Authority Te Mana Hiko mandated the **Consumer Care Obligations**, which include obligations on power companies for the identification and protection of medically dependent consumers.<sup>1</sup>

This document provides guidance to health practitioners about their role in the context of the Consumer Care Obligations. It replaces earlier guidance published in 2021, before the Consumer Care Obligations were mandated.

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1. You can read more about the Consumer Care Obligations on the Authority's website:  
<https://www.ea.govt.nz/your-power/consumer-care-obligations/>

## It is intended to support you in:

- identifying patients who may be medically dependent on mains power supply
- certifying a patient's medically dependent status for their power company, where appropriate
- assisting patients in accessing the protections available under the Consumer Care Obligations relating to power services.

For more information on how the Consumer Care Obligations support medically dependent consumers, please visit us here:

**[If you rely on electricity for medical reasons | Electricity Authority](https://www.ea.govt.nz/your-power/consumer-care-obligations/if-you-rely-on-electricity-for-medical-reasons/)**

<https://www.ea.govt.nz/your-power/consumer-care-obligations/if-you-rely-on-electricity-for-medical-reasons/>



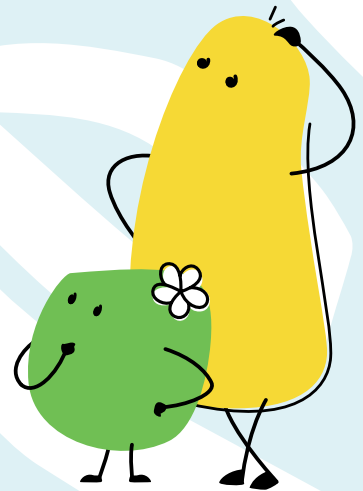
# Medically dependent consumers

## A medically dependent consumer is:

A residential consumer who depends on mains electricity for critical medical support, such that loss of electricity supply may result in *loss of life or serious harm*

This includes reliance on:

- **Critical electrical medical equipment (CEME)** – equipment supplied or prescribed by a health practitioner that requires mains electricity to support life or prevent serious harm such as a ventilator.
- **Other electrical equipment** used to support a medical treatment regime, such as a microwave used for renal dialysis fluid heating.



## What this means for health practitioners

Access to power is important for everyone. However, **medically dependent consumers** rely on power to prevent serious harm to their health.

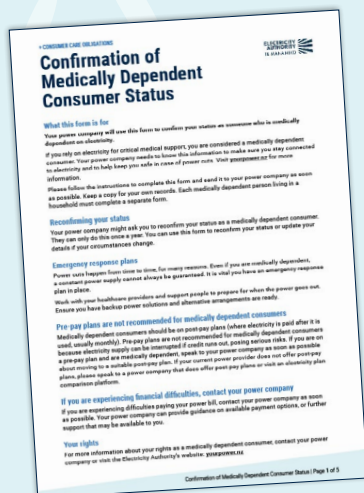
If someone needs power to prevent serious harm to their health, they need to let their power company know as soon as possible, and follow a process to be recorded as such. This ensures power companies will not disconnect a household for non-payment and will share information with lines companies to ensure they can identify households of medically dependent consumers when planning or responding to power cuts.

As part of the process to be recorded as a medically dependent consumer, your patient's power company may require confirmation of medical dependency from a health practitioner.

If a patient asks for your help to make an application for medically dependent consumer status, you need to assess their need and complete the [Confirmation of Medically Dependent Consumer Status form](#) (confirmation of status form)<sup>2</sup>.

2. The confirmation of status form can be found at: [https://ea.govt.nz/Medically\\_dependent\\_confirmation\\_of\\_status](https://ea.govt.nz/Medically_dependent_confirmation_of_status)

# The confirmation of status form



The confirmation of status form has parts that can be completed by the patient, and a part that needs to be filled out and certified by you as the health practitioner.

## Part of the form that must be filled and completed by the health practitioner

Page five of the confirmation of status form must be completed by a health practitioner with an appropriate scope of practice, such as a general practitioner, a specialist, a hospital doctor or a nurse practitioner.

This part requires you to certify that the patient meets the criteria for being medically dependent (see definition on previous page). You will need to:

- Assess whether loss of electricity could realistically result in serious harm or death of the patient.
- Apply clinical judgement based on the patient's health condition, reliance on CEME, access to backup power options, and the patient's ability to manage during outages.

Medical dependency on power can be temporary or permanent. If the medical dependency on power is temporary, such as during recovery following surgery or hospital discharge, please specify the start and end dates on the confirmation of status form and ensure the patient is aware of this timeframe.

If the medical dependency is permanent or long term, please indicate this by adding "no expiry date" on the form. The patient will need to give a copy of the completed confirmation of status form to their power company.

You must also certify that the patient has been provided knowledge, training, and support, in line with appropriate clinical practice, for:

- a) the use of CEME, where applicable, and
- b) the preparation of an emergency response plan, detailing what to do in an emergency or in any electrical outage situation.

Discuss the likely operating costs of their CEME and, if appropriate, advise them to contact their power company if they are concerned about paying their electricity bills.

## Parts of the form that can be completed by the patient

The first four pages of the confirmation of status form can be filled by the patient or caregiver, which includes the following sections:

- Medically dependent consumer details including alternate contact person's details, if any.
- Power company information including the electricity account details and installation control point (ICP), which can be found on their power bills.
- Privacy statement and patient's consent and other important notes in which patients have to sign to confirm they give consent and understand their responsibilities.

You can assist your patients with these parts of the application by:

- Checking that the patient has completed as much of the form as possible and provided all residential addresses where they reside (not a PO Box) and the name of the electricity account holder/s (if it isn't them).
- Emphasising the importance of completing this form and giving it to their power company.
- Making sure they have understood and signed the consent portion of the form.

# Other **important considerations** for health practitioners

## Communication

You should consider whether the health of your patient allows them to communicate effectively with their power company. You may want to discuss alternatives with them such as using an alternate contact person or support person.

Please ensure that your patient is aware that they should respond to contact attempts by their power company or use an alternate contact person to speak on their behalf.

Your patient's power company may contact you to confirm the validity of the confirmation of status form.

## Reviewing and maintaining medically dependent consumer status

Power companies can request an annual review of medically dependent consumer status. The process to review status is similar to the medically dependent consumer application.

When reviewing medically dependent consumer status power companies:

- must ask the medically dependent consumer to confirm if the information recorded remains correct
- may ask the medically dependent consumer to provide a reconfirmation form,

and:

- give them an opportunity to provide any further information regarding their continued medically dependent consumer status.

If a power company decides the consumer should no longer be recorded as a medically dependent consumer, they must provide at least two weeks' notice before removing medically dependent consumer status.

## Costs

In most cases, the consumer will have to pay any costs associated with becoming a medically dependent consumer.

However, if a power company requests reconfirmation of medically dependent consumer status, but an earlier confirmation or reconfirmation form remains valid (either because it has not expired yet, or did not have an expiry date), the power company must cover the reasonable costs of obtaining that new form.

## If a power company does not accept a consumer as medically dependent

If a power company does not accept a consumer, or someone in their household, as medically dependent, the consumer can dispute the decision and:

- make a complaint using their power company's complaints process; and
- make a complaint to Utilities Disputes if their complaint remains unresolved.

For the duration of the dispute, the power company should treat the consumer's home as if a medically dependent consumer resides in it.

## How to help your patient prepare for power cuts

Even if a consumer is medically dependent, a constant power supply cannot be guaranteed. Power supply can fail from time to time for reasons such as accidents, emergencies, equipment failures, disasters, storms, or wiring issues. Any one of these could leave a medically dependent consumer without power for hours, or even days. In these situations, restoration of supply to premises containing medically dependent consumers may not be able to be prioritised.



### How to help your patient prepare for power cuts

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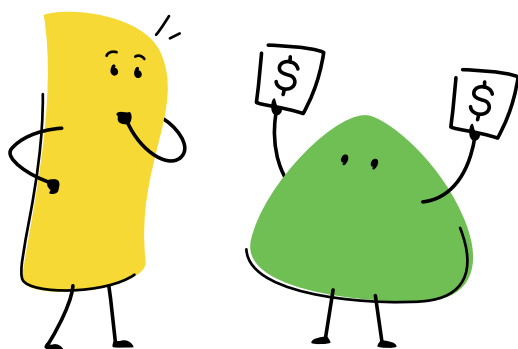
Medically dependent consumers should always have an emergency response plan to minimise harm if their electricity supply fails. As their health practitioner, you can help medically dependent consumers develop an emergency response plan. This might include having a backup power source for any CEME, such as batteries or a generator, or alternative arrangements to relocate.

A template emergency response plan and other useful resources can be found here: [https://www.ea.govt.nz/Emergency\\_response\\_plan](https://www.ea.govt.nz/Emergency_response_plan)

The plan includes instructions on what to do to stay safe if there is a power cut for any reason, including how and who to communicate with.

### What you should tell your patient to do in a power cut

- In a medical emergency, call 111.
- Follow their emergency response plan.
- Notify their power company immediately.
- If appropriate, contact their health practitioner as soon as possible.



### Postpay power plans are recommended for medically dependent consumers

There are two main types of power plan: prepay and postpay.

- In **prepay** plans, customers must pay for the power before using it.
- In **postpay** plans, customers pay for the power after it's used. This is usually at the end of the month.

It's safer for households with medically dependent consumers to be on postpay power plans. Postpay customers cannot be disconnected for non-payment if the power company knows a medically dependent consumer lives there. On prepay plans, electricity supply will stop if the account runs out of credit.

If your patient tells you they are on a prepay power plan, please advise them of the risks of being disconnected and that they will be better protected on a postpay plan. Power companies that sell postpay plans will help them to find a suitable plan for their needs.

### What if your patient is struggling to pay their power bills?

If you discover one of your patients is struggling to pay for the electricity they need to stay healthy, you can suggest they contact their power company. Power companies have obligations to support consumers experiencing payment difficulties.

The power company may be able to offer your patient a cheaper plan, connect them with a support agency or offer other support options. For example, the power company may refer the patient to the winter energy payment<sup>3</sup> from Work and Income, which provides eligible people with help covering the cost of heating in winter months. Work and Income may also be able to assist with an urgent power bill<sup>4</sup>, or the costs of heating, if someone has no other way to pay.

3. <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/winter-energy-payment.html>

4. <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/living-expenses/heating-and-power-bills.html>

# Checklist: How health practitioners can support patients

## » 1. Identify medically dependent consumers

- ☐ Assess whether loss of electricity could result in serious harm to the patient or death.
- ☐ Apply clinical judgement based on the patient's health condition, reliance on critical electrical medical equipment (CEME), access to backup power options, and the patient's ability to manage during outages.

## » 2. Certify medically dependent status

- ☐ Assist patients to complete the [Confirmation of Medically Dependent Consumer Status form](#)<sup>5</sup>.

As the certifying health practitioner, you are responsible for:

- ☐ Confirming that the patient meets the criteria for being medically dependent on a temporary or ongoing basis.
- ☐ Certifying that you have provided the patient with appropriate knowledge and support for the use of CEME where applicable and how to prepare for emergency electricity outages.
- ☐ Signing the certification section of the form.
- ☐ Ensure the patient understands the importance of providing the completed form to their power company as soon as possible.

## » 3. Support on emergency planning

Ensure the patient:

- ☐ Has been encouraged to prepare and [plan for an emergency](#)<sup>6</sup>.
- ☐ Understands the risks of emergency electricity outages that cannot be avoided.

Has been supported to plan how they will:

- ☐ Operate critical medical equipment safely if power is lost.
- ☐ Activate backup power sources, such as batteries or generators, if available.
- ☐ Relocate to a safe place if backup power is unavailable or exhausted.

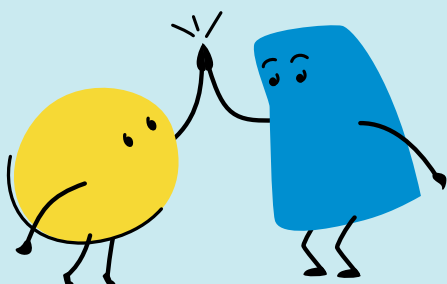
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6. The emergency response plan for medically dependent electricity consumers can be found at:  
[https://www.ea.govt.nz/Emergency\\_response\\_plan](https://www.ea.govt.nz/Emergency_response_plan)

+ CONSUMER CARE OBLIGATIONS

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