

Switched On Victoria Priority Assistance Policy

Peace of mind for those who could be at risk without their home phone.

Are you eligible for Priority Assistance?

If you, or someone living at your home, has a diagnosed life-threatening medical condition with a high risk of rapid deterioration and access to a telephone would assist to remedy a life-threatening situation, you could be eligible.

What is Switched On Priority Assistance?

Switched On Victoria's Priority Assistance is a service we provide, which is designed to help our residential customers, or people living at their home, who have a diagnosed life-threatening medical condition and whose life may be at risk without access to a fully-operational telephone service.

If there is ever a fault on the nominated telephone service of a Priority Customer and their residence does not have any other working standard telephone service (whether supplied by Switched On Victoria or another provider), or they need to connect their first standard telephone service, it will be attended to with the highest level of service practicably available at that time.

Indicative list of eligible medical conditions

This indicative list was created by the Department of Health and Ageing, in consultation with relevant non-government medical experts, and endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Australia.

Patients at high risk of respiratory emergencies

- Anaphylaxis or angioedema.
- Severe asthma (as specified in National Asthma Council Guidelines).

Patients with high-risk mental health disorders

- Severe mental health disorder with significant risk of self-harm or harm to others.

Technology dependent patients who are at high risk

- Haemodialysis in the home.
- Patients on home respirators or with tracheostomies.
- Oxygen dependent patients (e.g. with severe obstructive pulmonary disease).

Patients at risk of life-threatening hypoglycaemia or epilepsy

- Unstable insulin-dependent diabetes.
- Poorly controlled grand-mal seizures.

Patients at high risk of obstetric and neonatal emergencies

- High-risk pregnancy (e.g. placenta praevia).
- Infants at risk (e.g. because of prematurity) with history of apnoea.

Patients at high risk of cardiovascular emergencies

- Ventricular arrhythmias.
- Unstable angina.
- Acute myocardial infarction within the last 6 months.
- On a waiting list for aortic aneurysm, coronary or carotid artery surgery.

Other dependent patients who live alone, without support or in remote locations

- Patients with other dependent medical conditions would qualify for Priority Assistance only if they live alone, without social support, or in a remote location, for example:
 - Dialysis patients
 - Oncology patients
 - AIDS patients
 - Haemophilia patients, and others with bleeding disorders
 - People with severe disability.

If you're unsure whether your medical condition would qualify for Priority Assistance, please talk to your doctor.

Timeframes

We will provide priority customers with the highest level of service practicably available at the time of the connection and fault repair of a standard telephone service. It is important to note that we do not guarantee the service levels set out below. Neither do we guarantee continuous or fault-free services. Further, the service levels set out below are not guaranteed under the Customer Service Guarantee arrangements.

Connection of the first standard telephone service

If a priority customer does not have a standard telephone service connected at their residence, we will aim to connect their first standard telephone service within 24 hours of their request or requested date in urban and rural areas and within 48 hours in remote areas, or a longer period as specified by the Priority Customer concerned.

Where a first standard telephone service cannot be connected within the timeframes set out

above, we will offer Priority Customers an alternative, such as an interim service, unless extreme circumstances mean that we are prevented from accessing a priority customer's residence (for example, by reason of a natural disaster or risk to the personal health and safety of technical support consultants). Interim services are temporary services (usually using a mobile phone).

If you would like to order a new telephone service connection, please contact us on **1300 455 620** during normal working hours.

Faults

Where there are no working standard telephone services at a priority customer's residence, we aim to repair at least one standard telephone service within 24 hours of the customer's repair request in urban and rural areas and within 48 hours in remote areas, or a longer period as specified by the Priority Customer concerned.

Where we cannot repair a fault within the timeframes set out on page 4, we will offer priority customers an interim service, unless circumstances are so extreme that we are prevented from accessing a Priority Customer's residence (for example, by reason of a natural disaster or risk to the personal health and safety of our staff). Interim services are temporary services (usually using a mobile phone).

Priority Customers can call us on **1300 455 620** (Voice) or **Email:** customer.relations@sov.net.au.

Charges

We do not charge eligible customers for registering and receiving Priority Assistance. Please note that Priority Assistance does not affect connection fees, so customers will continue to be charged the standard rates for new service connections. Call and rental charges (and if relevant, connection charges) for an interim service will be at the same rates as a standard telephone service.

Your doctor may charge you a fee to complete the medical certification section of your application form. We have been advised that Medicare Benefits are payable if the certification is completed during a consultation, but that Medicare Benefits are not payable if the visit is for the purpose of obtaining medical certification only.

If you have any questions about this, you should check with your doctor.

Switched On's Priority Assistance is specifically designed for customers in genuine need. If customers not in need abuse this service, it can put the lives of those in genuine need at risk. If it is subsequently discovered that a Switched On's Priority Customer is ineligible and Switched On Victoria has incurred costs for prioritised work, we reserve the right to charge a fee.

What if my circumstances change?

Your registration as a Switched On priority customer will lapse whenever you move your telephone service from one telephone service provider, to another telephone service provider. If you are a priority customer with your existing telephone service provider and you transfer your service to us, you will need to apply to Switched On Victoria for Priority Fault Assistance. In addition, if you change your telephone service from one customer/lessee name to another customer/lessee name, you will need to re-apply to us for Switched On's Priority Assistance. Priority Customers do not need to re-apply for priority status when relocating residences, however you should inform our consultants that you are registered as a Switched On Priority Customer when/if you relocate from your residential address.

Things you need to know

- Priority Assistance is a service for our customers who have their access and local services with us. If you are not a Switched On Victoria customer and you believe you are eligible for Switched On's Priority Assistance, you will need to speak to your service provider.

Your health information, or that of the individual with the life-threatening medical condition, will only be used for the purposes of:

- assessing your eligibility for Switched On's Priority Assistance;
 - providing, administering and managing the Priority Assistance service and the services provided generally to you; and
 - in accordance with our Company Policy on Privacy Protection.
- If you do not have a standard telephone service or your standard telephone service is not working, you may be able to use a mobile (if you have one) or a payphone to make a call. However, you should also be aware that the functioning of a mobile phone depends on a variety of factors and, accordingly, there may be some situations where mobile phones may not work.
 - While you may wish to find out where your closest payphone is, you should be aware that there may also be some situations where use of a public payphone may be limited.
 - The provision of a second standard telephone service does not guarantee service continuity.
 - Priority Assistance only applies to standard telephone services. It does not apply to mobile phones.
 - Priority Assistance only extends to handsets provided and maintained by us. It does not cover externally purchased mobile phones or handsets. If you are using a cordless phone, you should be aware that you may experience difficulty operating the phone in the event of a power failure.
 - If you are not satisfied with the assessment and any subsequent rejection of an application for Switched On's Priority Assistance, you can call Switched On Victoria's Complaints department on **1300 455 620** then **press 1** and we will engage our existing complaint management process.
 - If you are not satisfied with the Switched On Victoria complaint management process, you may raise your complaint with the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) for resolution (on telephone number **1800 062 058***).

Key terms

Urban area means: a township or community grouping of 10,000 or more people.

Rural area means: a township or community grouping of 200 or more people but less than 10,000 within a standard zone.

Remote area means: a township or community grouping of less than 200 people or a township or community grouping located outside a standard zone.

Working hours means: 8am to 5pm excluding Saturday, Sunday or a gazetted public holiday in the place concerned.

How to apply

To register for Switched On's Priority Assistance, contact us on **1300 455 620** Monday to Friday during business hours.