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Dear MIWA Member

## How to survive loadshedding

As frustrating as the concept of loadshedding is, it's made worse by the fact that it doesn't look like it's ending anytime soon. As well as impacting South Africans in their personal lives in everything from travel delays to having no heat at home, it also heavily impacts the commercial sector and many of our members are reeling under the extra expense of having to budget for inverters and costly generators just to keep the lights on.

The Small Business Institute recently commented on how small businesses are hardest hit, since they're less likely to be able to afford the measures needed to cushion them from regular electricity cuts. And with power cuts averaging 2-4 hours at a time, this potentially means up to four hours of lost productivity in a given workday. Here are 5 strategies to help your small business survive load shedding in the months and years ahead:

### 1. Know when it's happening

The first step in dealing with a crisis is to have a plan. If you know when load shedding is likely to happen, you'll be able to plan your business activities around it, where you can perform tasks that don't need electricity (like deliveries) while the power is off. Mobile apps like Eskom se Push, Loadshed, Gridwatch and Loadshedder Alert give you handy tools like load shedding forecasts for your business's location, notifications of when load shedding is scheduled to start, as well as the ability to report outages and errors on Eskom's schedule.

## 2. Prepare ahead for the risks

Once you know when loadshedding is due to happen, the next step is to plan for the risks your business faces with the power going off. Risks can include things like stock spoiling and burglary, to power surges when the electricity comes back on, causing damage to electronic equipment. Take the appropriate measures to try and lessen these risks – if you sell valuable stock, invest in extra security measures for your premises; if you're a restaurant, make provisions for how you'll keep food cold or frozen. Also consider surge protection plugs, and back up your data if you have electronic equipment.

## 3. Make a small investment into an alternative energy source

We're not talking tens of thousands of rands to invest in a huge industrial-sized generator – for many small businesses, this cost outlay is simply not feasible. But a small generator or a UPS (uninterruptible power supply) need only cost a few hundred or thousand rands. These can at least provide you with an interim source of power and save you the hours of lost production. If lighting and heat are crucial for performing your work (for example if you're an artisan or tradesman), this may be an essential purchase. To get you started, Takealot stocks a good range of "load shedding business essentials", selling power banks, battery packs, solar panels and more.

## 4. Consider a shared factory/workshop environment.

While this may be an added expense to a small business, the hours you can make up for in productivity may be worth it if you can lighten the load with another business in your block.

## 5. Think of an alternative schedule

One advantage that small businesses have over large corporations is that they can be a lot more flexible in how they operate. Consider alternative working schedules for your staff that can adapt around load shedding hours. For example, plan repairs which require machinery during the hours when the power is on, and perform other tasks not dependent on electricity while it's off. You could also consider giving your staff flexible work hours so that they can still complete their work in their own time on a given day when power allows.

For a small business, load shedding is disruptive and frustrating. Having a plan and strategy in place can help cushion you to some extent, so that you can try and minimise the knock your small business takes because of this national power crisis.

Sources:

- <https://www.santam.co.za/blog/business-advice/the-small-business-owner-s-guide-to-surviving-load-shedding/>
- <https://www.fin24.com/Entrepreneurs/News/how-load-shedding-hits-smes-and-what-they-can-do-about-it-20190218>

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pieter Niemand', written in a cursive style.

Pieter Niemand

MIWA National Director