

# Eskom the food spoiler

If Woolworths' cold chain is broken for eight consecutive minutes, the retailer considers the products waste and dumps them. For Pick n Pay the "down time" is seven minutes...



(Image: [Flixtey](#), via Wikimedia Commons)

This was revealed when *The Times* asked Shoprite/Checkers, Pick n Pay, Spar and Woolworths detailed questions about cold chain maintenance, including how long after a break in refrigeration do they consider the cold chain broken and the goods spoiled.

Only Pick n Pay and Woolworths answered the question directly. The Spar Group's retail operations director Roelf Venter said only that the cold chain on perishable products "varies by category".

So should consumers be worried about the state of the perishable food bought from supermarkets in the height of summer, given the current extent of power outages?

Overall the "big four" retailers say "not at all".

Most of the big retailers have invested in generators, and those stores that do not have self-generated power to run their fridges and freezers say they discard stock spoilt by prolonged load-shedding.

Said Woolworths: "With load-shedding, our customers are telling us that they are struggling to maintain the cold chain in their homes. This is obviously a concern."

## Burning fuel to keep food fresh

Having to switch to generators to keep trading is an expensive exercise, given not only the capital cost of the generators but also the cost of diesel fuel, which is higher than that of electricity.

The Shoprite group has been spending R400,000 a week on diesel to run a generator in a single Checkers Hyper store.

Added to that is the cost of hiring the additional security personnel required to thwart opportunistic blackout thieves, and loss of profits from an inability to run certain profitable operations during load-shedding - for example, Woolworths chicken rotisseries.

So can we expect grocery prices to increase as a result?

No, said Pick n Pay; not necessarily, said Woolworths and Spar, given that prices are influenced by "many factors", including the petrol price, which has just dropped.

According to Business Day, the National Clothing Retail Federation of SA has urged Eskom to reconsider load-shedding at weekends, saying it had "a severe impact on the retailing sector as a whole".

Load-shedding during peak shopping times inevitably meant reduced trading and had a knock-on effect on government revenue from taxes.

Source: *The Times*, via I-Net Bridge

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>