

## **STATE CHANCELLERY**

government communication

### **Peter Buri**

government spokesperson  
Government building, 5001 Aarau  
Telephone direct 062 835 12 03  
Mobile 079 216 29 80  
peter.buri@ag.ch  
www.ag.ch/sk

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Electricity and gas shortage – Energy Canton Aargau takes responsibility, but also makes demands on the federal government**

**Government Council sets up task force on security of supply and is active with regard to a possible reserve power plant in Birr**

**As an energy canton, Aargau actively supports the federal government's plans to operate a reserve power plant in Birr in the short term to bridge any electricity shortages. The Department of Construction, Transport and Environment (CTE) and Government Councillor Stephan Attiger are holding talks with the federal government, the municipality and potential operators. The Government Council expects active national crisis management from the federal government. The priority is to take measures to avert an electricity and gas shortage. At the same time, the planning and legal basis for a possible shortage must be addressed. At the cantonal level, a task force on security of supply has been set up to deal with possible electricity and gas shortages, in which all departments are represented (see box). Important stakeholders such as business associations and employee organisations, municipalities, energy supply companies, institutions from the education and health sectors and so on are involved.**

"If several special circumstances coincide in the coming late autumn or winter, Switzerland is threatened with an electricity and gas shortage," explains Government Councillor Stephan Attiger, head of the Department of Construction, Transport and Environment (CTE), "if very low temperatures prevail for an extended period of time, if Russian gas supplies dry up because of the Ukraine war, or if electricity imports from abroad stop working."

The federal government has outlined four escalation levels for electricity and gas shortages (including restrictions, quotas, prioritisation, bans, cyclical grid shutdowns and so on).

**"As an energy canton, Aargau is affected to a special degree".**

"As an energy canton, Aargau is particularly affected by the challenges of a possible electricity and gas shortage," emphasises Energy Director Attiger: "It is the location of nationally relevant energy production plants and supply lines and is one of the main owners of AXPO, the most important national electricity producer, and the sole owner of AEW Energie AG, the most important cantonal grid operator. Furthermore, it has a unique industrial and scientific know-how cluster in the energy sector. Aargau is also a potential siting canton for possible reserve power plants and has a high density of industrial and logistics companies of national importance by national standards. "

The Government Council and the Canton of Aargau are willing to assume this responsibility and to make important contributions to solving the challenges and problems at national level.

**Reserve power plant in Birr for electricity capacity available at short notice**

The Government Council of the Canton of Aargau stands behind the Federal Council's net-zero 2050 target. Nevertheless, due to the special circumstances, it sees a need to create reserve capacities available at short notice in the sense of an insurance policy – even if these would be operated with fossil energies. The Birr site is of particular importance in this context: large parts of an infrastructure required for the operation of an oil and/or gas-fired power plant are already available there. The CTE and Government Councillor Stephan Attiger, in his capacity as Energy Director, are holding talks with the federal government, the municipality and potential operating companies with a view to creating a larger capacity of secure, flexibly available electricity production capacity as quickly as possible. The Government Council welcomes the fact that the Federal Council took the corresponding decisions at its meeting on Wednesday, 17 August 2022.

The Government Council fundamentally adheres to its three-pillar strategy for cantonal energy policy. The move away from fossil fuels and the associated dependence on foreign countries for the generation of space heating is to be advanced with the partial revision of the Cantonal Energy Act (public consultation on this runs until 2 September 2022) as well as with the additional credit proposed by the Government Council for the Energy Promotion Programme for Buildings 2021–2024 (dispatch for the attention of the Grand Council in preparation). The expansion of renewable energies –

especially photovoltaics with its very high potential – is to be intensified, among other things, with the canton's solar offensive that has already been decided.

### **Government Council expects active leadership role and unified national crisis management from the federal government**

The Government Council expects the Federal Council to play an active leadership role in managing any electricity and gas shortage and to do everything necessary to ensure the most uniform national crisis management possible. In doing so, the right balance must be found so that the lives of the population are affected as little as possible and at the same time the economic interests can be safeguarded. In doing so, the federal government must supplement the management, coordination and steering bodies and instruments that have already been created in such a way that all important stakeholders (energy supply companies, industry, employee organisations, cantons and so on) are represented or involved at an early stage.

The goal is to be able to deal with the ongoing and possibly changing challenges of an electricity and gas shortage as orderly as possible with appropriate planning, preparations and precautions, as well as crisis management coordinated nationally, cantonally and with all important players.

### **Federal basis is necessary for the application of emergency law**

As this is a nationwide shortage situation, the canton of Aargau expects the federal government, based on its constitutional competence regarding national supply, to also provide a federal basis. The necessary legal precautions, such as special ordinances, should be drawn up as quickly as possible and in accordance with the requirements of the four escalation levels – and not only in the event of an incident. In order to make the existing regulations and procedures in energy supply, labour law, industrial production and so on temporarily more flexible and to minimise temporal risks, the use of emergency law is indicated. Once such a legal basis has been created, the canton of Aargau, in consultation with the sitting municipality, can quickly issue possible and necessary construction and operating permits for a reserve power plant.

The Government Council also agrees with the Federal Council that there is great potential for the pooled use of emergency generators, which are already available in industrial plants. In the view of the Canton of Aargau, there is greater potential than the 280 megawatts of capacity mentioned by the federal government. The Government Council sees a further possibility for effective, flexible energy management that can be implemented at short notice in voluntary reductions in grid purchases by large consumers on the basis of auctions; such

a capacity market would have to be set up nationally by the federal government.

### **Cantonal crisis management for three phases**

"The Government Council is dealing with three phases in connection with a possible electricity and gas shortage," explains Energy Director Attiger. "The first phase is about raising awareness of the issue among the population, the economy and other important stakeholder groups and about the appeal to start saving energy now. In the second phase, the necessary planning and preparatory work must be done or precautions taken. And in the third phase, in the event of an incident, the prepared plan of measures is to be implemented." Sudden blackout situations are not in the foreground, but rather the escalation levels of the federal government.

The Government Council's goal is to ensure that any necessary restrictions have as little impact as possible on the private lives of the canton's residents and on public life. However, it will also strive to minimise the impact on the economy; the Government Council will seek pragmatic and flexible solutions together with the business associations and employee organisations.

### **Cooperation between the canton and the economy is important**

The Aargau economy is also negatively affected by a possible shortage of electricity and gas. There are certain industries that are considered large consumers according to the large consumer article in the cantonal energy law. This means that they have an electricity consumption of at least 500 megawatt hours and/or a heating demand of at least 5,000 megawatt hours per year. These include industrial production companies in the fields of building materials, metal processing, food processing, plastics production, printing, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, among others. The shortage situation also affects other companies to a particular extent; those that have energy-intensive applications and manufacturing processes with a consumption of over 100 megawatt hours per year (bakeries, vegetable cultivation, transporters, banks, catering and hotel industry).

If consumption were to be restricted, private individuals as well as companies would have to make a contribution. In order to minimise the negative effects of an energy shortage, cooperation between the economy and the canton is important. Under the auspices of the Department of National Economy and Home Affairs (DNH), a committee is being set up with representatives from business (Aargauer Industrie- und Handelskammer AIHK, Aargauer Gewerbeverband AGV) and employee organisations (ArbeitAargau). The aim is a regular exchange about sensible and efficient measures and their implementation.

### **Task Force on Security of Supply**

An electricity and gas shortage would affect practically all areas of life and thus also political areas. Contingencies or phased outages in the energy sector (for example, electricity grid shutdowns) would have a direct impact on private and public life, but especially on the relevant basic supply and the economy. In addition, there are medium and long-term effects such as economic and social consequences.

In order to be able to comprehensively identify and deal with the manifold challenges and broad subject areas, the Government Council has set up a Cantonal Task Force on Security of Supply, in which all departments, the State Chancellery (SC) and the Cantonal Command Staff (CCS) are represented. It systematically and comprehensively deals with the possible effects and prepares a contingency plan for the canton of Aargau in connection with a possible electricity and gas shortage.

Under the auspices of the Department of Construction, Transport and Environment (CTE) and the State Chancellery (SC), the task force analyses the challenges, issues and problems associated with electricity and gas shortages and draws up proposals for the attention of the Government Council for planning, precautions, preparations and cantonal crisis management in the individual phases.

The cantonal business associations and employee organisations, the municipalities and their regional management bodies (RFO), the canton's energy supply companies and other important stakeholders (for example from the health and education sectors and so on) are also involved.

### **Cantonal information platform [www.ag.ch/mangellage](http://www.ag.ch/mangellage)**

The topic of electricity and gas shortages affects the population and important stakeholders (municipalities, business, educational and health institutions, etc.) on a broad scale.

Accordingly, there are many concrete questions and a great need for communication in the three phases "sensitisation / energy saving", "planning / preparations / precautions" and "event" (restrictions, shutdowns).

The canton of Aargau has set up a cantonal information platform [www.ag.ch/mangellage](http://www.ag.ch/mangellage) for general questions, concerns and information needs in connection with an electricity and gas shortage and has set up a hotline e-mail address [mangellage@ag.ch](mailto:mangellage@ag.ch) for information.

The website [www.ag.ch/mangellage](http://www.ag.ch/mangellage) also provides tips on saving energy and energy efficiency. Furthermore, energieberatungAARGAU is available with a hotline e-mail address ([energieberatung@ag.ch](mailto:energieberatung@ag.ch)) and by telephone: +41 62

835 45 40. The platform [www.ag.ch/mangellage](http://www.ag.ch/mangellage) is being permanently expanded.

**Save energy now! – with energieberatungAARGAU** The savings of every Aargauer may seem small, but in total they make a considerable difference. With rising energy prices, they are also worthwhile financially. Energy already saved helps to keep the water reserves in the reservoirs for the winter. You and we are helping to minimise the risk or negative impact of an electricity and gas shortage.

Saving energy, especially electricity, is easy and in most cases can be done without sacrificing anything. Even increased attention to unnecessary electricity consumption has a considerable savings potential. Boiling eggs with a lid, as former Federal Councilor Adolf Ogi once did, is not the only thing that helps. If appliances are completely disconnected from the mains instead of being operated in standby mode, if screens are completely switched off when not in use or if the lights are switched off when leaving the room, electricity and money can be saved in a simple way.

There is great potential, especially for appliances that emit heat and for space heating. Every degree of reduction in room heat saves up to 6 percent energy. From autumn onwards, it is recommended that you no longer

T-shirt but a light jumper as standard clothing. This is important not only for buildings with gas heating, but for all properties. In rooms that are used little or not at all, the temperature can be lowered by several degrees without damaging the building.

Check whether the time has come to replace aging household appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers or lighting with new, more energy-efficient appliances. There are many appliances to choose from at [topten.ch](http://topten.ch) – water-saving shower heads are also offered there, for example.

Simple structural measures can also be implemented quickly. Depending on your skills, you may not even need to call in a specialist to insulate the screed floor or the cellar ceiling. It is also worth paying attention to uninsulated pipes in the cellar or leaky windows. Of course, a comprehensive renovation of the building envelope is never out of place.

Support is provided by energieberatungAARGAU – the canton's free contact point. Since the mid-1990s, the canton of Aargau has offered targeted advice for building owners and businesses. Tenants also receive advice and information on various ways to use energy sparingly. The pool of qualified energy advisors offers targeted advice on site.

In addition to the measures that can be implemented immediately, now is also the right time to think about long-term measures for energy efficiency in buildings or the generation of renewable energies at home. In particular, the massive expansion of decentralised renewable energy will help to secure the energy supply in the long term.

*Further information for media professionals:*

*Peter Buri, Government spokesperson, State Chancellery  
Phone 079 216 29 80 (call back)*