

## Health and Social Care Professionals Briefing Note: Power cuts due to a possible energy shortage

### Power cut and business continuity advice for professionals in the health and social care sector

#### Overview

Russia's invasion of Ukraine means that overall, this is likely to be a challenging winter for energy supply throughout Europe.

If there isn't enough electricity to power every home and business in Britain at the same time, the Electricity System Operator (otherwise known as National Grid ESO) – which is responsible for ensuring there is enough power to meet demand – has several measures to make sure we have enough electricity. As a last resort there could be a series of power cuts. In most cases, there would be some time to prepare for this.

#### Power cuts because of an energy shortage

In the unlikely event of power cuts due to an energy shortage, most households across Britain could be affected, including those on the Priority Services Register (PSR) as well as General Practices and care homes.

Not everyone will be affected at the same time. A rota could be implemented and communicated with customers; this rota will turn off 'blocks' with customers all allocated a block letter which can be found on your energy bill or at [powecut105.com](http://powecut105.com). In towns and cities, whole neighbourhoods would be without power. In rural parts of the country, much larger areas would be affected at once.

These types of power cuts are typically expected to last around three hours once or twice a day. It is most likely that they would happen around teatime and into the evening when demand is at its highest, but they could occur during the day.

Some customers in unaffected areas could still experience short term issues like dimming lights. Power could be switched off or reconnected up to an hour before or after a published rota time depending on national electricity use at that time.

#### Notification of power cuts

It won't be possible to call, text or email every customer in advance, but the Government and Electricity System Operator plan to let people know one or two days in advance of an outage through news and social media channels and their websites.

However, it's important to note that these power cuts may happen without time to warn customers.

#### Priority Services Register

If you have any patients, service users or customers who have additional needs and require extra help you should encourage them to join the PSR. While this will not prevent them from having a power cut, network operators are contacting customers on the PSR now, to ensure they have up-to-date information and to remind them about being prepared for the winter.

The service is designed to offer support to individuals in a power cut, but support may be more limited in the very rare event of a national energy shortage.

Details of eligibility for the PSR, how to sign up and who an individual's network operator is can be found at [energynetworks.org/customers/extra-help-for-customers](https://energynetworks.org/customers/extra-help-for-customers).

## Medical and mobility equipment

If you have patients, service users or customers who rely on electricity to power medical or mobility equipment they should:

- Test their back-up plan now. If they haven't got a back-up plan, they should develop one now. If you are not able to help them with this, their equipment provider should be able to help with this.
- Make sure that any back-up batteries are charged and working.

Further key information is also available as a [downloadable leaflet](#).

## What else can health and social care professionals do?

You can help your patients, service users or customers by:

- Making a plan for how a three-hour power cut could affect your work and how you can care for your patients, service users or customers.
- Including information about preparing for disruption in any communications you send to patients, service users or customers.

For further advice please visit <https://www.energynetworks.org/customers/care-and-assisted-living-providers>.

## Other than medical and mobility needs, what sort of things should people make a plan for?

### ***Lighting will likely go out***

- Be prepared with alternative sources of lights, e.g., torches (with batteries if needed). If you have a mobile phone, you may also be able to use it as a torch.
- There is a risk that candles, or paraffin heaters can cause fires.

### ***Heating may stop working***

- Most heating systems, including gas boilers, rely on electricity and so won't work in a power cut. This may limit your access to hot water.
- If you have a wood or coal fire, make sure you keep supplies of fuel.
- Ensure you have a working carbon monoxide alarm which is tested regularly.

### ***Electrical cooking appliances won't work***

- If you have a gas hob and/or oven, these will still work, but you may need to use a gas lighter. Take extra care.
- **Do not** use barbecues indoors, they generate a lot of toxic gases including carbon monoxide, which can kill.

### ***Communications may be affected***

- Cordless phones will not work, and mobile phone networks might also be affected. However, most traditional plug-in phones should still work.
- Broadband, data services and wi-fi are also likely to be affected.

## More details about potential power cuts due to an energy shortage

### How likely are power cuts due to an energy shortage this winter?

National Grid ESO's analysis shows that these type of power cuts are very unlikely. However, there is a higher risk this year than there has been in previous years.

### Are any locations protected from power cuts?

A very limited number of sites are protected from power cuts because of an energy shortage. These are typically locations that are deemed to be critical national infrastructure, such as air traffic control centres and major hospital facilities with accident and emergency departments.

### Can homes or my business become a 'protected site'?

Homes cannot become 'protected sites' as they are not critical national infrastructure.

Organisations that are not already aware of their protected status will need to apply to become 'protected' as this is not automatic. There are very strict qualifying criteria set out by the Government, and more information on this is provided via the Electricity Supply Emergency Code procedures. To apply, you should speak to your local network operator. Details can be found at [powercut105.com](http://powercut105.com), by entering the postcode of your site.

### What about stairlifts?

Stairlifts often have backup batteries. You should encourage your patients, service users or customers to check how long their backup battery is expected to last. If they are unsure, they should speak to their manufacturer.

You should also encourage them to make sure that they have access to a ground floor exit, telephone and heating for the duration of any power cut.

### Will compensation be available?

Where a power cut is due to a shortfall of generation, not a fault on the network, compensation will not be paid.