



**Northern Powergrid (NPg)
Emergency Power Cuts Stakeholder Briefing held on 15th December 2022
Summary of Q&A [Issued: 6th January 2023]**

Block letters

1. There were a number of questions around having difficulties locating the block letter either on the bill or 105 website.

To clarify, you can find your block letter by entering your postcode online at [UK Power Cut Call 105 Free| Find Your Electricity Provider \(powercut105.com\)](#). It should also be printed in the top half of your electricity bill.

2. There were a number of questions about whether block letters can be negotiated or changed.

The load blocks are established annually to ensure an even distribution of load between each block and therefore ensure that all customers are equally affected during any event as far as possible. It is not possible to change block letters on an individual customer basis.

3. Is it possible to get a file with all the postcode block numbers?

We have shared the list of Northern Powergrid postcodes used to identify load blocks for the powercut105.com website with Local Resilience Forum Partners. As this is public information, stakeholders can contact their local LRF to request this information.

4. There were several questions about how block letters are distributed geographically.

Blocks are spread out rather than altogether in one single area to give customers the best opportunity to access other areas that are on supply. Therefore, there will be some areas of the same block in different cities.

Likelihood and timings of emergency power cuts

5. When could the first power cut happen?

The national Electricity System Operator has the responsibility to ensure that forecast electricity supply is balanced with expected generation availability. The NGENSO winter outlook report indicates that the risk period for this scenario commenced in January.

6. Will the power come back on after three hours?

The timetable will tell you when you will definitely be without power, and when there is a risk, you may be without power. Your power might be switched off or reconnected around 30 minutes before or after the published time depending on national electricity use at that time. We are however, recommending customers allow up to an hour before making contact with NPG.

7. You have advised power cuts are most likely between 4pm and 7pm, but the ESEC states all times in the x8 three hours blocks of that 24-hour period (00:00 to 00:00). Why is there a discrepancy?

The scenario described in the Northern Powergrid presentation and the NGENSO Winter Outlook report indicates the risk period to be the weekday tea-time peak.

The ESEC is designed to additionally plan for a full 24/7 implementation to cater for all potential outage scenarios.

Protected sites and vulnerable customers

8. There were a number of questions about which organisations are on The Protected Sites List.

A very limited number of sites are protected from emergency power cuts. These are typically locations which are deemed to be critical national infrastructure, such as air traffic control centres and major hospital facilities with accident and emergency departments. These sites are detailed on The Protected Sites List.

The Protected Sites List is commercially and security sensitive. It is therefore not available to be shared in full other than through Government departments or the site operators themselves.

Organisations which 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 in the Electricity Supply Emergency Code. If you believe you meet the criteria, to apply, you should contact us at: <https://www.northernpowergrid.com/contact>.

Care Homes, Warm Hubs and other similar sites such as pharmacies and doctors' surgeries are not likely to meet the criteria as their connections will be deeply embedded within the network such that they cannot be separated from the surrounding customers. They will therefore be included in the rotas and should have appropriate contingency arrangements.

Power cuts can occur due to other causes than just this type of national electricity emergency and we encourage all businesses to ensure they have business continuity plans in place to cope with an electricity interruption which may last longer than the 3 hours of a planned emergency power cut.

9. Will the mobile phone network be impacted?

Mobile phone service will depend on the coverage of the mobile phone network and the extent of the electricity interruption and should not be relied upon.

10. Are households on the Priority Services Membership protected or given advanced notice?

No. Power cuts can occur at any time, without notice. In the event of an emergency power cut, it won't be possible for us to give you advanced notice in the way we normally would for a local planned outage. This is because Distribution Network Operators may receive as little as 30 minutes' or less notice of an instruction for them to implement a power cut. We are contacting our customers on the Priority Services Register now, to ensure they have up-to-date information and to remind them about being prepared for the winter. Wherever possible, we will begin contacting customers in advance of a rota coming into operation.

11. What about people who rely on medical equipment?

In most cases, customers who are medically dependent on electricity will be familiar with the process and limitations of their equipment as power cuts can occur from time-to-time during a typical year, including during severe weather, for regular maintenance or due to damage and other routine faults. Customers who require a continuous supply of electricity for medical

reasons and would need medical support during a power cut, should seek advice from their local health service provider. Backup power supplies and associated equipment should be regularly checked and maintained by a competent person. If you're concerned, you should speak to your medical equipment or health care provider now. Once emergency power cuts have been scheduled customers will be able to find their rota and what it means for them at powercut105.com or by dialling 105 and entering their postcode. The rota load block letter is available from powercut105.com now.

We have contacted all Priority Services Customers to advise them of the need to be prepared. Customers who rely on electricity for their medical equipment should seek advice from their equipment supplier or the NHS to make a personal backup plan. NPg/Network operators are unable to do this for customers.

12. If someone registers on your Priority Services list, do you link with the gas list too or do people need to register on both?

The energy industry has arrangements to share Priority Services information so customers can register with their supplier or their electricity or gas network operator.

Informing customers

13. What kind of advice for preparing for these cuts will you be distributing to people? What methods do you plan to use to get this information out there?

We have communicated with all priority services customers to advise them of the potential for emergency power cuts this winter and the need to prepare, we have made contact with medically dependant customers via letter and all other Priority Service customers via e-mail, text message and voice message to landline (depending on information we hold).

We have also contacted all other customers using digital means to prepare them in advance of any potential Emergency Power Cuts.

14. Will advisory information be available in to a British Sign Language (BSL) format to make it accessible to deaf people on the website?

A video of our letter to Priority Services customers in British Sign Language is available to view on You Tube by clicking this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zzL5adACyI>

Further, a video in British Sign Language about how to be prepared for a power cut, regardless of the cause is also available to view on You Tube by clicking this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzXBK6Ct4E>

15. Will advisory information be available in a range of languages?

Our 'Emergency Power Cut letter to customers' is available in 6 other languages - Arabic, Chinese, Polish, Punjabi, Ukrainian and Urdu – all available to download by clicking this link: [Emergency Power Cuts \(northernpowergrid.com\)](#) and scrolling to the Download Documents section at the bottom of the web page.

Our 'how to be prepared advice' has also been translated in to the same six languages - all available to download by clicking this link: [Be prepared \(northernpowergrid.com\)](#) and scrolling to the Download Documents section at the bottom of the web page.

16. Previous communication with Northern Powergrid noted that preliminary information would be issued with regard to potential rolling outages a week in advance to allow for large consumers to plan. Is that still in place or will information only be available a day ahead?

We have communicated with customers to advise them of the potential for emergency power cuts this winter and the need to prepare. The advance notice for an actual event will depend on the Electricity System Operator and the industry will endeavour to give as much notice of an event as possible via the most appropriate communications routes but this will depend on the type of event.

17. Is there a social media toolkit or any social media assets you can share?

We have provided Local Resilience Forum partners with the full range of communications that have been issued so they can cascade them to partner organisations.

Northern Powergrid business continuity

18. Will your call centre have power if that block goes off?

Our 24/7 Operations Centres have UPS and generator back up for a pro-longed period and will therefore continue to operate in the event of an external power cut to the site.

19. Are you comfortable with the manning of your call line centres because lots of people are going to then be trying to call?

We have increased capacity in our Contact Centre and the national messaging systems available via the **105**-telephone number and its accompanying website have been designed to cope with a national level of disconnection in an event of this type.

20. If 5% of homes come back online at the same time will that create a surge in demand that causes a problem?

Load blocks are switched in a controlled manner according to a schedule determined by the Electricity System Operator.

21. What steps have been taken to manage the risk that Northern Powergrid will be unable to maintain system stability on reconnecting a block?

The management of the UK wide electricity system is the responsibility of the Electricity System Operator, NGENSO, not Northern Powergrid. Blocks are switched in a controlled manner in accordance with a schedule provided by the NGENSO to maintain system stability as far as possible.

Compensation

22. Is there any financial support for businesses – particularly SME's – for any loss of business they will face in an emergency power cut?

No. Under Ofgem rules, compensation is not available for an emergency power cut of this nature.

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