

COVID-19

UK Energy Industry response

Key messages

- As providers of essential services and critical infrastructure, the energy industry has well-practised contingency plans in order to ensure the delivery of gas and electricity.
- The industry is fully committed to providing all the help and support it can to its customers through this difficult time. We are
 - Identifying and prioritising customers at risk
 - Supporting customers who are impacted financially as a direct or indirect result of COVID-19.
 - Supporting prepayment meter customers directly or indirectly impacted by COVID-19 to stay on supply.
- These are extraordinary circumstances and the industry is working closely with the government on a daily basis to ensure there is no disruption to the generation and supply of energy to customers.
- The sector is very conscious of the potential consequences for customers confined to their homes for prolonged periods and, in particular, customers in vulnerable circumstances and those on prepayment meters who may need additional help and support with repayments or keeping meters topped up.
- Suppliers will be doing all they can to identify such customers and provide support where possible on a case by case basis.
- At this time there will be no disconnection of credit meters, except in exceptional circumstances such as a safety need or energy theft.
- On behalf of its members, Energy UK is in contact with the UK, Scottish and Welsh Government's, Ofgem and Citizens Advice on what actions, protections and practical steps suppliers can take to support and reassure their customers throughout the outbreak.

Advice to customers and constituents

COVID-19 energy advice/ information for consumers

As providers of essential services, energy companies have contingency plans in place in order to ensure the delivery of services carries on as usual in all circumstances - including the current fast developing coronavirus situation.

The industry is fully committed to providing all the help and support it can to its customers through this difficult time.

Energy bills:

Under these exceptional circumstances, suppliers are aware that more customers might be struggling and, in particular, those in vulnerable circumstances or customers with prepayment meters may need extra support with repayments or topping up meters. If a customer is struggling, they should contact their energy supplier.

Suppliers will endeavor to support customer that find themselves in financial distress where they can, which could include debt repayments and bill payments being reassessed, reduced or paused where necessary.

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We continue to be in discussions with the government on further financial support that will be required for customers in the coming days and weeks.

Customers on prepayment meters:

If a customer is self-isolating and unable to top up their meter they should get in touch with their energy supplier. There will be additional support in place to ensure customers stay connected on a case by case basis. Such support could include nominating a third party, having a discretionary fund added to their meter, or being sent a pre-loaded top up card so that their supply is not interrupted. For customers with a smart prepayment meter, they can top up remotely.

Keeping the lights on:

Electricity generators and National Grid, as providers of essential services, have well-practiced contingency plans in order to ensure the delivery of services carries on as usual. As an industry, we are working closely with the UK Government to identify any issues and mitigate them during these exceptional times.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:

As more people stay at home and self-isolate they should be aware of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. It is essential that households have an audible carbon monoxide alarm fitted and that it is tested regularly to ensure it is working.

In case of a gas or carbon monoxide emergency, customers should call 0800 111 999 - 24 hours a day. Find out more about carbon monoxide poisoning and how to stay safe:

<http://www.co-bealarmed.co.uk/how-to-stay-safe/>

Home visits and installations:

Currently, all energy suppliers are following government, NHS and Public Health England guidelines in relation to all home visits. Due to the fast-moving nature of the situation, energy suppliers will continue to monitor and review their procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their customers and staff. Clearly, as the current situation evolves, it may be the case that non-urgent home visits (including smart meter installations) might have to be postponed. Due to the ever-evolving nature of the situation, and uncertainty around how long any restrictions may be in place, it is too early to assess the implications for the smart meter roll out.

Contacting your energy company:

Be aware that suppliers' phone lines could get busy with longer than usual waiting times – due to staff shortages and/or high volumes of customers trying to get through. Customer can also often contact their supplier through the supplier's website, app, email or social media.

At the same time, we would encourage all customers to keep an eye out for any communication from their supplier.

Further information

We will continue to provide updates on the ever-changing situation related to COVID-19. If you required any specific information please do not hesitate to contact Simon Markall on simon.markall@energy-uk.org.uk / 07912965933, if you required any further information.

Energy UK

Energy UK is the trade association for the energy industry with over 100 members spanning every aspect of the energy sector – from established FTSE 100 companies right through to new, growing suppliers and generators, which now make up over half of our membership. We represent the diverse nature of the UK's energy industry with our members delivering almost all (90%) of both the UK's power generation and energy supply for over 27 million UK homes as well as businesses.

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