



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

Severe Weather – Christmas 2013

Implementation Closure Report

A review of Electricity Distribution Industry
Performance

October 2014

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Introduction

Between 22 and 28 December 2013, as a result of two severe winter storms and consequent damage to the distribution overhead line network, almost 1 million properties suffered disruption to electricity supplies. Though 95.3% of customers were restored within 24 hours, 1.7% of customers experienced a disruption to supply in excess of 48 hours, and there were lessons to be learnt to improve the effectiveness of the industry response to disruptive events, and minimise customer inconvenience as much as possible.

Following a review¹ into Network Operator performance, commissioned by Ed Davey Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, the Distribution Network Operators, working through the Energy Emergencies Executive Committee have implemented 23 actions identified to improve future preparedness and response, DECC has implemented the remaining two actions.

The final action, the implementation of a single number to enable consumers to contact their network operator during an electricity disruption or because of a safety concern is being delivered by the Energy Networks Association. The complexity of this programme necessitates a longer time frame, and is planned for implementation in April 2016.

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken by industry to complete the actions identified, and represents the significant amount of work that has been done throughout 2014 to implement improvements. Though this represents closure of the work on the implementation of the review findings, DECC, Ofgem, E3C and Network Operators recognise that this is part of an on-going responsibility to review, maintain and improve the effectiveness of the response to disruptive events. E3C has agreed that an annual review of this work, following the winter, will ensure new lessons are identified and reflected in on-going processes and procedures for preparedness and response.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287012/DECC_-_Festive_disruption_review_-_Final_2_.pdf

Christmas Forecasts and Escalation

F1: Network Operators will hold a workshop to share their approaches and discuss best practice on weather forecasting and escalation triggers

The Energy Networks Association hosted a meeting on 18 March 2014, with representatives from all of the Distribution Network Operators (DNOs), to share their approaches and discuss best practice for receiving and reacting to weather forecasting. ENA have since produced a Good Practice Guide from the points agreed at the meeting. The differences in the DNOs current forecasting caused a number of DNOs to review their own procedures and all organisations now receive of a 10 day summary forecast, as well as the 5 day more detailed forecast, to align with the workshop outcomes.

As a result of the meeting, DNOs also agreed to share with each other and key stakeholders, when weather forecast content causes them to trigger pre-emptive escalation. This increased communication in the run-up to a potentially disruptive event facilitates a more proactive approach, particularly if mutual aid is likely to be required.

Communications with Customers

C1: Network Operators to ensure their telephony platform does not force disconnect callers

All DNOs have reviewed their telephony and confirmed their platforms will not force disconnect callers. As a consequence of their reviews, a number have also made improvements to their systems. These include increasing line capacity and the introduction of upgraded software/technology to improve resilience.

C2: Network Operators to hold a workshop to consider the development of a “reasonable worst case scenario” for call volumes

The Electricity Task Group (ETG) held a workshop for DNOs on 19 March 2014 to develop a national ‘reasonable worst case scenario’ for a number of different potential disruptive events. The scenarios assessed included a black start event, rota load disconnection, loss of a single grid supply point, loss of multiple primary substations and loss of transmission/ generation in-feed. The group forecast the number of customers that would potentially be affected by these events and the number of concurrent calls that would hypothetically be received as a result. All DNOs have, or are in the process of, stress testing their systems based on the ‘reasonable worst case scenario’ to ensure that their preparations for the coming winter are robust. In addition this information has been used to review contact centre resources and also informed the Single Emergency Number (SEN) specifications.

A follow-up meeting was held on 23 April 2014 and the work was finalised in July 2014.

C3: Network Operators actively review and stress test their telephony systems to ensure adequate call receiving capacity / transmission to manage extreme events

Each DNO has confirmed that, following the 2013/14 winter storms, they have reviewed their telephony systems against their own worst case scenarios developed under action C2. Where appropriate, DNOs have implemented improvements and are continuing to engage with their service providers to ensure the on-going improvement of the systems.

All DNOs have, or are in the process of, stress testing their systems, with different loading scenarios. All reporting of live events has shown the systems to be resilient to the reasonable worst case scenario. Further comfort has been gained via the performance of systems during the Valentine’s Day storms.

Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN), UK Power Networks (UKPN) and SSE, users of the ‘Storm platform’, have formed a user group to maximise the benefits from the system and to continue to ensure that when considered as a whole the system meets their combined requirements.

C4: Electricity Northwest to review its telephony platform capacity and processes to ensure that it is meeting customer expectations in the context of the reasonable worst case scenario for call volumes

Electricity North West's system answers all calls within a couple of seconds with either an operator or a tailored recorded message. Electricity North West has now carried out research with its engaged customer panel – a broad cross section of customers who have been briefed in the industry and DNO businesses – to ensure that Electricity North West fully understands customers' expectations and requirements for telephone answering during storm or other disruptive incident conditions. Following this research, Electricity North West are finalising alterations to its telephony platform to allow customer choice and the option to queue for the next available agent, in line with customers' expectations and to ensure that emergency safety issues and vulnerable customers are identified on entering the automated system and redirected to a customer service representative as a priority.

Electricity North West is introducing these improvements through 2014 and 2015 in line with system changes and associated training requirements.

C5: UK Power Networks should ensure appropriate capacity upgrades are identified and implemented

UK Power Networks (UKPN) has confirmed that it has identified and implemented appropriate capacity upgrades prior to the publication of DECC's Severe Weather Christmas 2013 report. The new telephony system was rolled out in 2014 and increased the number of advisors that can take calls simultaneously.

C6: Network Operators will hold a workshop to share practices to social media engagement and Network Operators will each develop a social media engagement and resource strategy and stress test this for use during disruptive events to ensure effective use of available tools / systems

This action was taken forward by the Communications Task Group (CTG) of E3C. ENA held a workshop on 12 May 2014 to discuss what worked well and areas identified for improvement. A Social Media Good Practice Guide has been produced from the discussions.

Each DNO has developed a social media strategy, based around the recommendations from the Good Practice Guides. DNOs are ensuring the resilience of their social media communication in a number of different ways specific to their own operating model, initiatives include:

- Launching a new Webchat service.
- Improving resilience and usability of websites and, when complete, stress testing web and social media prior to Winter 2014.
- Extending the availability of Twitter interaction.
- Stress testing social media capacities using external consultants, to include participation of both contact centre and communications teams.
- Procurement of new social media content management systems (CMS).

This is considered an on-going area of work due to the rapid expansion of social media.

C7: Northern Powergrid shall submit a data flow change request to Gemserv on behalf of the other Network Operators to initiate the release of customer contact details for use during disruptive events. Network Operators shall ensure that, in advance of winter in October 2014, they have, where available, obtained the telephone contact details of customers from energy suppliers.

All energy suppliers made available land line and mobile telephone contact details of customers they hold, to all DNOs in September 2014, so that they can be used during disruptive events to improve direct communication with customers. The transfer of this information took place via Gemserv secure website, following an industry-agreed process. To ensure the details remain up to date, a further refresh will take place in February 2015 and then repeatedly thereafter via batch updates.

All DNOs have undergone a programme of data cleansing and are developing systems to ensure that once data is made available, full advantage can be taken of this.

It should be noted that unless every customer has provided their contact details to their Supplier then this does not mean that DNOs have contact details for every Customer, however this action is expected to give rise to a significant improvement. It will therefore be an area of on-going development.

C8: Network Operators will review and test their processes and systems to ensure that they are capable of allowing field staff to efficiently and effectively provide timely and accurate updates to network customers contact centres.

All DNOs have completed their review and confirmed their readiness. A number of changes have been made, or are in the process of being developed including:

- Introduction of a new Community and Customer Advisor role in the depot structure, providing local reporting and communication across the depot area to ensure information provided is as accurate as possible.
- An on-going strategy to enable field staff to use hand held portable devices to input information directly into their fault management systems and which will be immediately available to agents in the customer contact centres.
- Development of a smart phone application to support their processes for the recce of faults during severe weather and will allow members of the public to report damage.
- Enhancement of a number of customer information processes relating to In-business call-takers, Customer Information Officers and the Addition of Estimated Time of Restoration team. These processes were tested in September 2014.
- Deployment of damage assessment scouts or spotters.

C9: Network Operators will develop and implement a common framework that clarifies standards expected around the identification and provision of a restoration time to customers and its subsequent proactive update in the manner agreed with the customer.

ETG, with input from the Communications Task Group, held a workshop on 23 May 2014 to identify good practice relating to the standards expected around identification and provision of restoration times to customers. A follow up meeting was held on 18 June 2014 and a Good Practice Guide was produced which sets minimum standards for the provision of supply restoration information to its customers during emergency events.

Where necessary, DNOs are making changes to their current processes to incorporate the best practice that was not yet undertaken within their existing framework.

C10: Network Operators should take steps to identify the levels of recognition amongst customers, and address any gaps using appropriate communications strategies, including making sure that, whilst a national power outage number is developed, each Network Operator's customers are aware of the correct phone number to call in the event of disruption to power supplies.

It is recognised that this is an on-going action that requires continuous effort by the industry. DNOs have been undertaking differing initiatives in order to improve the customer awareness of their organisation. These include:

- One has recruited a new team of Customer Community Advisors to provide face-to-face updates during lengthy power cut events and has conducted live BBC local radio phone-ins with customers, with more planned ahead of winter.
- A number have redesigned their websites to make it easier for customers to navigate.
- A number are undertaking brand awareness campaigns, informed by market research, throughout the winter months using radio and press advertising, targeted door-to-door leaflet drops and digital advertising on relevant websites.
- One has developed a letter with a peel off sticker of emergency numbers that is sent to all of its customers.
- One has invested in internet search engines to make it easier for customers to find their number.
- One has sent a 'Power for Life' leaflet to every household in its area which sets out its role and contact details.
- One has introduced a single emergency contact number across all its licence areas ahead of the single national number and fridge magnets displaying this new number will be distributed to every household in its licence area at the end of October 2014.

National Power Outage Number

N1: Network Operators (led by the Energy Networks Association) will develop a single national number for customers to call during a power disruption.

ENA has established a Single Emergency Number (SEN) Project Board with associated task groups to take this project forward. The project is progressing and although securing agreement from Ofcom is critical to success, the agreed plan remains on track, with tender documents being signed off and made available to interested parties. The project is due for completion in April 2016. More information is available on the ENA's website at:

<http://www.energynetworks.org/info/emergencies/single-emergency-number.html>.

N2: ENA to produce implementation plan for single national number agreed with Network Operators and by DECC.

The Project Initiation Document (PID) was approved by the Project Board on 21 May 2014. An Invitation to Tender has now been issued and Ofcom have been engaged regarding the case for the three digit number. This is available at:

<http://www.energynetworks.org/info/emergencies/single-emergency-number.html>.

Resource Availability and Management

R1: Network Operators will hold a workshop to share their resource and contractor management strategies.

ETG held a meeting on 24 April 2014 and discussed their overall management strategies. The different approaches taken have been documented. In addition, ETG have developed a forward looking model which gives a holistic overview of GB over-head line resources going forward. Thus the adequacy of resources can be reviewed from time to time.

R2: Network Operators will review their contracting arrangements and their dependence on them to ensure the rapid availability of adequate resources to deliver resilience particularly over extended holiday periods.

Each DNO has now reviewed its resourcing arrangements, looking both at total numbers of staff and the division between direct labour and contractors. Improvements to individual DNO strategies differ, some examples include:

- Renegotiation of contract terms to clarify management process and timely availability of contractors.
- Increasing the availability of contract resource.
- Signalling the medium term intent to rebalance the dependency on contractor resources.

R3: Network Operators will review their contact centre resourcing arrangements to ensure adequate and trained capability is available under the reasonable worst case scenario.

All DNOs have reviewed their contact centre resources, with a number significantly augmenting the pool of available call takers. This is being complemented by an extensive training programme in advance of the winter. Some have also identified ramp-up call centres.

R4: UK Power Networks will review the resourcing strategy of its contact centre to ensure it has sufficient flexibility to upscale during a disruptive event.

UKPN had implemented a Vodafone/ Redwood storm platform to be able to take customer calls from anywhere within the building. UKPN are currently training in-house call takers from around the business that will add 800 call takers to the dedicated team in the Contact Centre.

R5: The NEWSAC Mutual Aid protocol should be reviewed and if appropriate, updated to ensure it is adequately proactive, and criteria around strategic prioritization are clear.

The NEWSAC Review Group has held two meetings, on 25 March and 29 May 2014, during which a number of proposed improvements to the NEWSAC core documentation and associated appendices have been agreed in principle.

DNOs have agreed to share notifications of weather preparedness escalation within their businesses (i.e. when one DNO moves to an escalated state of preparedness, due to a weather related event, they advise all the other DNOs; not just neighbouring ones), raising the overall

awareness and preparedness of the industry. In addition Member Companies will share the detail of their weather forecasts with all NEWSAC contacts whenever they consider that potential network damage could result in a “Category 1” incident.

There is a clear recognition that contracting resources will be managed and accounted for in the same way as in-house resources during incidents. The new wording of the NEWSAC documents was formally approved in September 2014.

Media Engagement

M1: Energy Networks Association to co-ordinate a campaign to raise awareness of the role of the Network Operator, complementing individual awareness raising efforts by each Operator.

A workshop was held by ENA on 8 April 2014 which identified a significant amount of work carried out by individual DNOs within their regions to inform customers about specific aspects of their work. These included general safety messaging, targeted interactions with industry and in particular a growth in understanding around their services to domestic and business customers.

However, it was acknowledged that general public awareness was more limited. All companies agreed that there is a desire for customers to better understand the role of the networks and that this had greater benefits beyond the storms at a time when the issue of energy was heightened and individual DNOs have their own on-going awareness strategies

ENA envisages a longer term awareness campaign taking place over the next 18 months to be also used to launch and publicise the Single Emergency Number once it has been established.

M2: Energy Networks Association to develop a scalable, proactive national media engagement strategy for use during disruptive events with a national impact.

ENA discussed a scalable national media strategy and raising awareness of the DNOs role at the communications workshop on 8 April 2014. Using the feedback of the DNOs at this workshop, ENA has put together Incident Protocols which are a guide for those involved in handling the communications around an incident and the relationships between ENA, its members and other stakeholders. The Protocols are owned by ENA and will be reviewed annually as part of winter preparedness. The Incident Protocols include information relating to:

- Triggers for a crisis: ENA involvement is triggered by geographic location, customer impact and media interest
- Stages of an Incident: including key messages and suggested wording
- How ENA will receive timely and accurate information from all DNOs
- How impact of the event will be reported
- Roles and responsibilities
- ENAs Digital Presence
- Post-Incident Evaluation.

ENA intends the Incident Protocols to act as a strategy to deploy activity to support companies and government, as well as ensuring the media have information and content to convey an appropriate and balanced picture to the public.

M3: DECC to produce a clear scope and requirements for reporting during disruptive events, setting out roles of organisations, and information required.

A reporting requirements template, together with DNO preparations reporting template and incident/ reporting flow chart was finalised and circulated at ETG and relevant stakeholders on 6

June 2014; it has since been used to effect during potentially disruptive events experienced in the summer of 2014.

Welfare Provision

W1: Network Operators will hold a workshop to share strategy and approach to welfare provision and deployment learning and identify best practice.

All DNOs attended workshops which took place on 23 May and 18 June 2014. A Good Practice Guide has been produced on Welfare provision, which sets down minimum standards for welfare provision, with particular emphasis on customers held within its Priority Services Register during emergency events. All DNOs have internally reviewed their current processes in light of the Good Practice Guide to ensure they meet the requirements.

W2: Network Operators will review arrangements with the British Red Cross and/ or similar providers ensuring where appropriate contracts exist.

W3: Network Operators should consider establishing framework agreements with local service providers to supplement existing welfare arrangements.

Following the workshops relating to welfare provision in May and June 2014, all DNOs have reviewed their arrangements with welfare providers. A number of DNOs have made changes to existing arrangements, for example to extend the hours of support. Where necessary, DNOs have introduced new arrangements to improve welfare support.

Goodwill Payments

G1: Network Operators will review their internal processes for notifying eligible customers of goodwill payments, and ensuring these are paid efficiently

DNOs have reviewed their internal processes for notifying eligible customers of goodwill payments and the payment mechanisms through which these are made. Improvements include:

- Increased publicity on how customers can claim from them; to include website, local media advertising and contacting customers via direct correspondence.
- Reviews of alternative payment methods, including PayPal and BACS.
- Regular internet/ social media updates to customers on its process and what criteria would be used to identify who would qualify for a payment.
- Introduction of a Customer Relationship Management tool in autumn 2014 which will allow text, emails or written notification to be issued to customers to raise their awareness about goodwill payments.

Multi-Agency Engagement

MA1: DECC will pass feedback on engagement challenges into the appropriate body of central Government

DECC has had discussions with the Department for Communities and Local Government to work to ensure that there is both effective engagement with local responders during a disruptive incident, but also an efficient and proportionate use of DNO resources. DECC continues to work with central government departments and agencies to ensure the on-going effectiveness of response arrangements to be able to effectively manage disruptive events.

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