



Be winter ready

Power cut and business continuity
advice for care homes and
assisted-living residences

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Who is this for?

This leaflet is for anyone responsible for running care home services, people who work in a care home setting and those who manage assisted-living residences.

Thinking ahead and making a plan for emergencies in winter is important. While energy networks are built to withstand high winds, heavy rain and snow, severe winter weather can sometimes damage the network and interrupt supply. Gas appliances like boilers also work harder in winter and are more vulnerable to a break down in very cold weather.

This leaflet explains the precautions you should take as a business, ways your local network operator can help and what to do and who to contact in the rare event of a power cut or if you smell gas.



About Energy Networks Association (ENA)

ENA is the voice of the energy networks. We represent the industry which runs the electricity wires, gas pipes and energy system in the UK and Ireland. We help our members meet the challenge of delivering energy to communities safely, sustainably and reliably.

The energy networks make sure the energy you buy from suppliers gets to homes and businesses safely. If there's a supply issue like a power cut, our rapid response teams are here around the clock to fix it as quickly as possible.

10 steps to be winter ready

The key essentials to prepare ahead of time to ensure those in your care stay safe this winter.



Think communications

- ☑ **Follow your energy network operator on social media** so you can easily get local updates in realtime if power cuts affect you this winter. You can check who your local network operator is on [powercut105.com](https://www.powercut105.com).
- ☑ **Check your backup communications plan.**
 - Do you have a telephone that works without a mains plug?
 - Many telephones now have a fibre connection, but it's worth checking if yours is a fibre or copper connection.
 - Can your switchboard divert calls in an emergency?
 - Do you have another way to charge communications devices, such as phones, tablets or mobile devices?

Remember, mobile devices (including internet dongles) could have limited or no service during a power cut.

Ask your internet network and telephone system providers for further advice or information.

- ☑ **In an emergency call the freephone national numbers.**

Power Cut
105

Gas Emergency
0800 111 999

**POWER CUT?
CALL 105**



Think backup power

- ✔ **Contact your medical equipment and partner health care providers** to prepare risk management plans and ensure staff know what to do if medical equipment loses power unexpectedly.
- ✔ **Check your mains power backup for all critical equipment.** Considerations might include:
 - Ensuring backup medical equipment such as dialysis machines or respirators are in working order.
 - Air beds and ceiling hoists.
 - Stairlifts. These often have backup batteries but you should check how long the backup battery can last. If you are unsure, speak to your manufacturer.
 - Installing backup generator support for piped oxygen. Generator support can take the form of either a temporary hired solution that connects via a prewired connection or permanent, hardwired to your own electrical network.

- ✔ **Have a backup generator already?** Check it meets the power needs and connections you might have to support in an emergency.
- ✔ **Explore additional backup power options** like ‘uninterruptible power supply’ (UPS) devices. These provide a few minutes emergency battery backup if power fails and can help keep communications platforms, like your Wi-Fi connections and computer and tablet devices, running.
- ✔ **Think security.** Can you manually over-ride security doors and shutters if they are mains operated and lose power? Most come with these in place or a battery backup, but it’s best to check with your installer.

Think business continuity

- ✔ **Review your Business Continuity plans for emergency situations.** This could include considering how your business would operate without power and how your resilience preparation would work in practice. Your local network operator may also be able to offer further resilience advice or support, find their details at www.energynetworks.org/be-winter-ready.
- ✔ **Prepare an emergency kit.** Keep a torch handy to help your staff and residents if you are without power during the night and ensure warm clothes, blankets and food which doesn’t need heating can be readily accessed.

Power cuts because of an energy shortage

In the unlikely event of an energy shortage, the Electricity System Operator (otherwise known as National Grid ESO) – which is responsible for ensuring there is enough power to meet demand – could instruct the companies who operate the local power network to reduce electricity demand by implementing power cuts. This means switching power off to at least 5% of UK households at once to reduce power demand in the local area to protect the electricity grid and avert longer term issues. They are a last resort and wouldn't affect everyone at the same time.

How does it work?

The electricity system in Great Britain is sectioned into blocks that can be temporarily switched on and off until the shortage is resolved, and the network can safely go back to normal.

Each electricity meter is assigned a 'block letter'. Where there is time to implement an emergency rota, different block letters will be timetabled to be without power for around three hours once or twice a day.

How will I know?

Where possible, National Grid ESO plans to implement a national timetable of power cuts to fairly share power across the country. In the unlikely event of an energy shortage, power cuts can take place without warning if National Grid ESO instructs local networks to reduce power demand in the local area to protect the electricity grid and avert longer term issues.

While it wouldn't be possible for network operators to call or text in advance in an energy shortage scenario, customers will be able to find their rota and what it means for them at [powercut105.com](https://www.powercut105.com).

The rota will only be published once the power cuts have been approved to take place.

Some customers on unaffected rota blocks could still experience short-duration impacts like dimming lights or low power. Power could be switched off or reconnected around 30 minutes before or after a published rota time depending on national electricity use at that time.

Protected sites

Some sites will be protected from such power cuts. These are typically emergency sites which are deemed to be critical national infrastructure, such as air traffic control centres and major hospital facilities with accident and emergency departments. Exemptions aren't automatic. Organisations have to apply for protected status and there is very strict qualifying criteria set out by the government. Further information can be found in the government's Electricity Supply Emergency Code: www.gov.uk/government/publications/electricity-supply-emergency-code.

Visit ENA's website to learn more: www.energynetworks.org/be-winter-ready.

Extra help from network operators

The Priority Services Register is a completely free service to help people who have additional needs because of their medical or personal circumstances.

It supports individuals rather than businesses, but care homes or services providing assisted-living arrangements can help their residents sign up. It's available in England, Scotland and Wales.



The type of help available will vary depending on individual circumstances, but network operators are contacting 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.

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 emergency. See our information on 'Power cuts because of an energy shortage' opposite.

Contact your local network operator for registration advice and to find out more on the type of help available:
[www.energynetworks.org/
be-winter-ready](http://www.energynetworks.org/be-winter-ready).

And for more information visit:
[www.energynetworks.org/customers/
extra-help-for-customers](http://www.energynetworks.org/customers/extra-help-for-customers).

Who can apply?

Customers can access Priority Services if they:





- have reached state pension age
- are disabled or have a long-term medical condition
- use medical equipment or aids reliant on electricity
- are recovering from an injury
- have a hearing or sight condition
- have a mental health condition
- are pregnant or have young children
- have extra communication needs

Get in touch

Need help with your resilience plans for this winter?

Your local network operator may be able to offer advice. You can find their contact details using our post code search tool at:

www.energynetworks.org/be-winter-ready

-  @energynetworks
-  @energynetworksassociation
-  @energynetworks
-  @energynetworks_

