


DCUSA Request For Information (RFI)




The Isolations for Safe Working Group

Planned Supply Isolations for Safe Working on Customers' Electrical Installations in Domestic Premises

Purpose of this Request For Information:

This RFI is seeking information on current processes for managing main isolations for safe working and whether any changes are required to improve current provisions.

	<p>The Working Group has agreed that in order to assist their work, they should proceed with this Request for Information.</p> <p>Parties are invited to consider the questions set in section 5 and submit comments using the form attached as Attachment 1 to dcusa@electralink.co.uk by 22 November 2019.</p> <p>The Working Group will consider the RFI responses and determine the appropriate next steps for the progression of their work in this area.</p>
	<p>Impacted Parties: Distribution Network Operators, Independent Distribution Network Operators and Suppliers</p>

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1. Summary

What?

- 1.1 The Distribution Connection and Use of System Agreement (DCUSA) is a multi-party contract between electricity Distributors and electricity Suppliers and large Generators. The DCUSA Panel has the ability to establish sub-groups to which they can delegate their duties, powers and functions and following discussions within the Interventions Working Group it was agreed that a separate sub-group be formed, with the aim of identifying and evaluating current processes for provision of main supply electrical isolations for safe working on consumers' electrical installations.

Why?

- 1.2 When undertaking work at premises, an electrician may require the premises to be de-energised (i.e. to stop electricity flowing). Electricians are not permitted by the Distributor to undertake de-energisation work on the DNO equipment (cut-out) themselves. However, recognising that it is dangerous for work to be performed on live connections and that it is unsatisfactory for seals to be broken by unauthorised persons, the DCUSA Panel established a Working Group to seek to understand current processes for providing isolation services to consumers and consider any improvements that should be made to improve customer service and more importantly to encourage safe working.

How?

- 1.3 DCUSA Parties have reviewed this matter previously; in January 2009 UKPN put forward a Change Proposal (DCP 038 'de-energisation by non-industry parties')¹ to establish a formal 'electricians access scheme' but this was rejected. Parties raised concerns over permission being granted for electricians to break the cut-out seal as this may lead to a presumption that the meter seal may be broken also.
- 1.4 Notwithstanding the above concerns and following feedback from stakeholders, DCUSA parties have agreed to re-evaluate this matter due to an expected upturn in electrical installation work in consumer premises, associated with the installation of Heat Pumps and EV Charging Points. The Isolations for Safe Working group is keen to ensure that any installers involved in this type of work are encouraged to undertake the work safely and that robust processes are in place to facilitate safe working by all parties.

¹ <https://www.dcusa.co.uk/change/de-energisation-by-non-industry-parties/>

2 Governance

Scope of the Isolations for Safe Working Group

- 2.1 The scope of work undertaken by the Working Group is limited to understanding the current processes for providing isolation services to consumers and identifying whether they are fit for purpose and if not, considering and agreeing any improvements that should be made to improve customer service and more importantly to encourage safe working. The group's activity will not cover business specific provision of main supply isolations process implementation issues. It is not envisaged that there will be any cutover with activity covered by Meter Operators and arrangements under Meter Operation Code of Practice Agreement (MOCOPA)². Dependant on the nature of identified issues, some cross-group collaboration may be required.
- 2.2 The objectives of the Working Group are to:
- Identify issues, difficulties and impacts from the existing processes for the provision of main supply electrical isolations
 - Prioritise identified issues into the Work Plan
 - Act as the pre-modification process for issues relating to provision of main supply electrical isolations
 - Develop strawman Change Proposal(s) to rectify identified issues while considering all the possible impacts on DCUSA parties
- 2.3 The Working Group shall provide updates to the DCUSA Panel following each meeting in the form of a 'Headline Report', (which will be presented by the Chair) which shall include:
- Confirmation of the Working Group's members;
 - Evidence of how each of the objectives have been, or will be, met;
 - A summary of the assessment of issues and any conclusions drawn thus far; and
 - Confirmation of further work to be undertaken.

Next Steps

- 2.4 Following a review of the RFI responses, the Working Group will consider whether any changes are required to improve current provisions.

² <https://mocopa.org.uk/>

3 RFI Background

- 3.1 In order to de-energise premises, electricians must identify who the electricity Supplier is, contact them and ask them to arrange for a Meter Operator agent to visit the premises to perform the work. There may be lead times associated with arranging for the Meter Operator to attend site. Metering work is subject to the Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations³ which require the Supplier to be able to agree a 'timed appointment' within a two-hour window. Where multi-premises projects such as rewiring of blocks of flats are involved, there may be more than one Supplier involved and so the electrician may have to liaise with several parties before being able to undertake work.
- 3.2 Suppliers may charge the customer for performing a temporary de-energisation/re-energisation. Many suppliers also offer a service where their Meter Operators will attend to fit a double-pole isolator switch which the electrician can then use to safely isolate the supply.
- 3.3 Electrical contractor associations report that their members are often frustrated by the current isolations process due to the long lead times and the difficulty in finding the correct energy supplier contact to liaise with for an isolation visit. There is a common view that the current isolations processes are broken and that something needs to be done to encourage the correct behaviours from electrical installations contractors.
- 3.4 There are over half a million consumer unit replacements per year in the UK and it is very clear that the vast majority of these replacements occur without the supplier being called to site to undertake an isolation. In cases where the customer's electrician takes matters into their own hands and undertakes the isolation themselves (illegally), the cut-out seals, which are designed to act as a deterrent to tampering, are broken. This impacts the Distributor's equipment, the customer's installation and the intermediate metering system, which could adversely affect the safety of the building and its occupants. However, in the worst cases, access to the DNO cut-out by an unauthorised electrician can also result in serious injury as they will not necessarily have the training and awareness needed to manage the potential risks involved.

4 Isolations for Safe Working Group RFI

- 4.1 This RFI is seeking information on current processes for managing main isolations for safe working and whether any changes are required to improve current provisions. Respondents are invited to respond to the questions set in section 5 below and submit comments using the response form attached as Attachment 1 to dcusa@electralink.co.uk by 22 November 2019.

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/699/body/made>

5 RFI Questions

5.1 The Working Group is seeking industry views on the following RFI questions:

Question Number	Question
1.	What is your current process for authorising/providing de-energisation of the customer's installation for electrical works to proceed?
2.	Is the provision of de-energisation a chargeable job to the consumer?
3.	Does your company offer a service for installing a double-pole isolator switch? If so, is this a chargeable job to the consumer?
4.	Can you provide some examples of any improvements that might be made to the current isolations process in order to offer a better level of service to consumers and encourage safer working by their electricians?
5.	Do you foresee any barriers to developing a self-funded access Scheme for authorised electricians (MOCOPA like arrangements for isolations with registered individuals)?

5.2 Responses should be submitted using Attachment 1 to dcusa@electralink.co.uk no later than, 22 November 2019.

5.3 Responses, or any part thereof, can be provided in confidence. Parties are asked to clearly indicate any parts of a response that are to be treated confidentially.

Attachments

- Attachment 1 – RFI Response Form