

DCUSA Issues Form (DIF)

This form should be used by parties to submit matters for consideration to DCUSA Standing Issues Group (SIG). The completed form should be issued to DCUSA@electralink.co.uk

| Document Control | |
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| Date Submitted: | 20/04/2022 |
| Issue Title: | Provision of a supplier 24/7 Emergency Metering Service |
| Attachments: | |
| Issue Number*: | |
| Meeting Reference*: | |

*Assigned by DCUSA Secretariat

| Originator Details | |
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| Party Name: | Electricity North West |
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| Nature of Issue |
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| <p>We have a concern that as most suppliers do not seem to provide a 24/7 emergency metering service that enables a customer to speak to an agent and/or receive a visit from a field operative outside normal business hours, this is causing detriment to customers.</p> <p>Also, this can lead to customers, contacting the DNO, when they have no supply of electricity. This can result in DNO field staff attending 'no supply' jobs that turn out to be caused by faulty meters owned by the supplier i.e. no fault with the DNO owned equipment.</p> <p>In Electricity North West's distribution services area we attended 1,133 [an average of 5 a day] of this type of job between Apr-21 and Nov-21, which resulted in abortive visits as we were unable to assist the customer, apart from advising them to contact their supplier and for customers on our Priority Services Register signposting to a local partner (e.g. Age Concern). This results in inconvenience to customers who had to contact and then wait until their emergency metering service provider can attend. This means</p> |

that vulnerable customers and in particular prepayment customers maybe left off supply either overnight or in the case of weekend/Bank Holidays the customer can be off supply for a number of days, before the Supplier can arrange for an emergency metering service appointment.

Unfortunately, as these situations can occur out of hours when most suppliers contact centres are closed this can cause frustration/anger for customers which they sometimes take out on the member of DNO staff who happens to be on site.

Solution Overview – If Known

Solution Description

Following the implementation of DCP 364 ‘Provision of Information on Suppliers Emergency Metering Service Provisions’ on 5 November 2020, there is now a ‘Supplier Emergency Metering Service Provisions Register’ to be populated by Supplier Parties to provide and maintain up to date information on their emergency metering service provisions, but this needs to go further and provide an opportunity for a customer to ‘speak’ to its supplier when off supply due to a metering fault, and if required receive a physical ‘visit’ from the supplier’s metering service, where reasonable, to fix the meter fault and restore supply out of hours.

Examples (Depending on the supplier’s current metering service):

- A customer who loses supply, due to a metering fault, late on a Wednesday night can potentially expect to be without electricity at least overnight
- A customer who loses supply, due to a metering fault, late on a Friday night can potentially expect to be without electricity for at least three nights
- A customer who loses supply, due to a metering fault, late on a Friday night on a bank holiday weekend can potentially expect to be without electricity for at least four nights

Customers do not appear to be aware of suppliers’ policies in this area, some of which may be to leave their customer off supply until the next working day. These types of out of hours scenario can result in the customer (who may be vulnerable) still ringing the DNO, using up valuable resources which should be dealing with network faults.

Four years ago, on 30 January 2018, Ofgem sent suppliers an open letter on emergency metering services for both gas and electricity smart meters.

Ofgem stated *“We expect suppliers to put a plan in place to ensure that they deliver emergency metering services in an efficient manner and, in particular, in a manner that delivers positive customer outcomes.”*

A customer staying off supply because of a metering issue would not be seen as a ‘positive’ outcome’.

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| | <p>Ofgem went on to say: <i>“We consider that, as a minimum, supplier’s plans should take into account the following factors:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. All suppliers should have emergency metering services in place for all of their gas and electricity customers using smart meters.</i> <i>2. Suppliers should deliver an emergency metering service appropriate for an essential service to all energy consumers, paying special attention to vulnerable consumers.</i> <p><i>In line with the Standards of Conduct, key things suppliers should think about when they are developing their plans include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• How suppliers plan to communicate to energy consumers what their emergency offerings are. For example, providing clear contact details in the event of an out-of-hours emergency</i> <i>• Detailed plans for vulnerable consumers. Suppliers should put in place appropriate arrangements to meet the needs of vulnerable consumers, for example, whether to provide alternative heating and cooking, and re-establishing supply promptly</i> <i>• Details of how suppliers will provide emergency metering services and how quickly they will restore the energy supply to consumers in an emergency metering situation. E.g. Key Performance Indicators for fixing the faulty meters</i> <i>• How suppliers will engage with DNOs/GDNs in emergency metering situations, to ensure that emergency arrangements are delivered in an efficient manner (given that GDN/DNOs are likely to be the party who identifies that it is a meter issue)</i> <i>• How suppliers will deal with a more widespread emergency replacement in a large-scale emergency, such as under post-flood recovery scenarios or similar</i> <i>• How suppliers will provide emergency metering services to customers with traditional meters or advanced meters in a smart world</i> <i>• Generally, how suppliers can deliver this service in the most effective and efficient way”</i> <p>Consequently, DCP 364 needs to be built on to aim for a well communicated and efficient supplier led 24/7-emergency metering service. This would enable, if required, a customer to speak to an agent and/or receive a visit from a field operative, where reasonable, to fix the meter fault and restore supply out of hours.</p> |
| Lead Time for Implementation | 12 – 18 months |