

Hello, I am an employee of G4S working as a meter reader on behalf of British Gas. I was searching the OFGEM website trying to find the licensing rules for electric meters, perhaps you can assist me to answer my question.

During the last two years I have been finding more and bypassing and tamperings of electric and gas meters and feel sure it is on the increase, in particular with prepayment meters, with electric prepayment meters being the favourite, as it is very easy and straightforward to do, it only requires a few inches of wire and a screwdriver to achieve free electricity. In the theft of electricity it impacts on the gas supply as the tamperer can then heat the house and also if tank immersion heaters fitted can then provide hot water.

I undertake two yearly gas and electric visual safety inspections on credit meters ONLY, for British Gas and sometimes EDF and other suppliers. Given that the vast majority of my bypass finds are with prepayment meters I am very concerned that for some reason we never visually safety check these prepayment meters at all. I have never done any, and none of my workmates have either ever done a two year "must read" on prepayment meters. We seem to have arrived at a working practice of not inspecting prepayment meters on a two year cycle at all, and given that they are the easily the most tampered meter by a wide margin, the fact that no one ever checks these meters is encouraging theft of gas and electricity. Our overall access rate on prepayment meters is always very low too, less than 50% I would have thought.

Having heard about the proposals of British Gas to switch to five year meter inspections I would say it would be not suitable with any meters other than smart meters. Gas and electric theft is definitely on the increase. Most meter readers have no idea how to spot tampers and bypasses either. EON and NPower I have been told by their meter readers don't do any bypass training at all. British Gas have sent their revenue protection officers to our meetings once or twice for some advice.

My main reason for this email is to make a complaint that prepayment meters are not getting two year visual safety inspections. The suppliers naively think that because they can see what is happening regarding payments via the electronic top up key/card, that gives them the excuse not to spend money on warrants and locksmiths etc. Judging how many tampers I am finding they have got it badly wrong. I only find tampers when they make a mistake and let me see the meter for whatever reason. Most just never answer the door ever, and get away with free electricity and gas for years and the suppliers are doing absolutely nothing about it, shunning their corporate responsibility to save money. Please can you forward my complaint to the appropriate person if possible, regards Stuart Chester