

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Direct Dial: 020 7901 7034
Email: david.barnes@ofgem.gov.uk

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Dear

Guidance on Distribution Companies' Priority Registers

You may recall that in its December 2003 report on the provision of services to vulnerable customers (Priority Service Research Project - 165/03), Ofgem undertook to provide guidance on the inclusion of customers on distribution companies' priority registers. The attached guidance focuses on the requirements on DNOs to maintain a register, as contained in Standard Condition 17 of Electricity Distribution Licences. However, it is also relevant to suppliers who are required to provide DNOs with relevant information. The guidance is therefore being sent to domestic electricity suppliers as well as DNOs.

If you have any questions on the guidance, please let me know.

Dave Barnes
Head of Social Issues

Guidance on inclusion of relevant customers on distribution priority registers

Who is eligible?

Under Standard Condition 17 of Distribution Licences, there are two distinct sets of customer eligible for inclusion on the DNO register. These are:

- 1) *Customers who depend on electricity for medical reasons by virtue of being of pensionable age or disabled or chronically sick; or*
- 2) *Customers who have special communication needs.*

In both cases the distribution company need only include on their register those “who require advance notice of planned interruptions to supply”.

It is for companies to decide which customers are eligible for inclusion according to their individual circumstances, but such customers might include customers who are dependent on life-supporting medical equipment (e.g. dialysis or ventilator), or with other medical equipment (e.g. stair lift or bath hoist) and in the case of customers with special communication needs, might include blind or deaf customers.

Who is not eligible?

Customers who join the supplier's Priority Service Register (PSR) may not always be eligible for inclusion on the distributors' registers. Customers who are on the PSR but do not require advance notice of planned interruptions to supply may not be included on the distributors' registers. For example, such customers might include those who have only registered to use a password (but see note below), to receive special controls and adapters or to receive a regular quarterly meter read.

Who decides eligibility?

A customer may refer themselves to a distributor, or may be referred directly (not through the supplier) by a third party, e.g. a carer or medical agency. In these cases, the distributor is responsible for registering the customer and for passing the customer's details to the supplier for inclusion on the supplier's PSR.

Suppliers may also request a customer be included on the distributor's register. Suppliers should only transfer the relevant details of customers relating to the distributor's licence obligations.

Passwords

Suppliers are required to notify distributors of the special means of identifying persons acting on behalf of a licensee such as a password to use in making

contact with the customer. There is no pre-requisite for the customer to be on the distribution register for a password to be used in communication with them. A customer need not appear on the distribution register if the sole reason is for the use of a password.

Maintenance of register

Performance of the distributors' and suppliers' licence obligations are dependent on information on relevant customers being up to date. Both distributors and suppliers should notify each other where they have been informed of changes in customers' circumstances. This might include removal from the register where a customer requests, where the customer has died, or when there is a change of tenancy. This might also include, in cases where the customer has registered directly with the distributor, the distributor informing the new supplier of the customer's inclusion on the register when a customer changes supplier.

Mechanism for referral

Referrals are made through form D0225 of the Data Transfer Catalogue. This usually takes place through the Data Transfer Network (DTN), however, there is no pre-requisite in the licence to use the DTN.

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