

Electricity North West  
Customer Service  
Reward Scheme Submission  
2008/2009

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Telephony System

# Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Telephony System

During 2008, Electricity North West (ENW) introduced a new IVR telephony system. This system was implemented to allow ENW to improve the level of service given to its customers who were experiencing loss of supply.

The IVR system, which is fully integrated into ENW's Fault Management Systems, enables ENW to accurately confirm to a customer that they are impacted by a known fault, and provide them with the most up to date information relating to that fault.

The system also enables the Customer Service Representative to identify a customer, who has contacted ENW regarding a loss of power, but has either not been recognised by the system or been unable to talk to a representative.

Once an incoming call is received it hunts for a free representative.

If a free representative is found, the call goes straight through and is answered directly.

If a representative is not found, the system identifies the call via Call Line Identification (CLI). If the CLI is not recognised, the call then goes through a post code street name identification loop to identify the customer.

This facility allows ENW to proactively contact these customers to ascertain the nature of the problem and either inform the customer of fault details or to register the customer's details to enable restoration of their supply.

Prior to implementation it was also recognised, that the information captured when a customer contacted ENW could be used to further improve the service it provides for its Priority Service Register (PSR) customers.

People on the PSR are ENW's most vulnerable customers, and our research has shown that they greatly value the opportunity to discuss the loss of supply with a Customer Service Representative.

Usually registered because of medical needs, they require some confidence in the timescales for rectification being given, which an informed conversation with a representative can provide, enabling customers to make alternative arrangements where necessary.

All PSR customers are shown against the Low Voltage feeder from where they receive their supply. Additionally, faults are highlighted from the relevant substation on our fault management system even if the customer does not contact us. This enables ENW to prioritise its operational response dependant upon the needs of its customers.

On contacting ENW, the customer enters the IVR system. They answer a series of questions that enables identification using CLI or if needed postcode recognition. Following this, the system will confirm if the property is involved in a fault and if so gives details of the fault i.e. cause of the loss of supply, status update and expected restoration times.

In the case of a PSR customer, they are offered the opportunity to talk to a Customer Service Representative. If the customer wishes to take advantage of this opportunity, the system attempts to put the call through as a priority call. If no representatives are available immediately, then the customer is placed into a priority queue and asked to hold the line. If ENW is unable to provide representative within one minute, the customer is informed that ENW is aware they are off supply and that a representative will telephone them back within 30 minutes to discuss their issue.



ENW believes that the combination of its customer research, technology innovations and customer service processes ensure that PSR customers receive a world class service. Of particular note is that:

Our customers obtain positive confirmation that we know they are a PSR customer and we know that they are without supply. This provides them with considerable peace of mind and is one of the most important factors identified by our customer surveys

Our customers are given the latest information about their loss of supply and in addition, given automatic priority access to a customer service representative. This is of particular benefit during events such as storms when getting through to a representative can be difficult. Again our customer research has consistently shown that PSR customers value contact with an agent much more than other customers.

Our Control Centre and field teams know that the customer is off supply and are therefore able to offer call backs to the customer to update them on progress if estimated times of restoration etc change and to check on their welfare.

ENW is able to contact the customer at the end of the interruption to confirm their supply has been restored and inform them that their supply is now secure.

ENW updates customer connectivity information every two weeks to ensure all new PSR notifications are captured within its fault management systems. In addition to information from suppliers, ENW holds its own records on customers who have previously been in contact to give notification of particular difficulties.

ENW also holds information on historic events affecting these key customers to enable both customer service representatives and field staff to offer a more focused and informed response.

ENW is committed to continually improving the level of service its customers receive. In January 2009, our monthly telephony performance under Ofgem's incentive scheme had improved to 4th place of all DNOs compared to a lower quartile performance in 2007/08. The rolling average performance had also improved our position to 4th of all DNOs.

Our speed of response was 2.18 seconds which maintained our 3rd place position against all DNOs. This was our best performance to date since the incentive scheme was introduced by Ofgem. The average DNO response time in January was 30.12 seconds.

The February customer satisfaction tracker results showed that 63% of customers were very satisfied with call handling, an 18% improvement on the previous month and the best performance of 2008/09.

