

National Grid: Safety

Executive summary

2010/11 has been a milestone year in our ongoing public safety strategy. It saw us launch a major sector first in Staffordshire where 2,000 households are benefiting from a pilot scheme where engineers provided CO alarms, briefing packs and training during customer visits.

Another major innovation has been in the area of social media where using Twitter and Facebook is described by customers as “fantastic” and “very helpful” when it comes to updating them during emergency incidents.

The year also saw our most comprehensive collection of safety communications campaigns to date. Not only have we communicated to high risk groups like students and the elderly, we have also engaged with the public as a whole using TV, radio, newspapers,



and further innovative use of social media sites like Facebook and Youtube. It is fair to say that we engaged the nation - potentially more than 48 million people in the UK - with our safety awareness message, and just in time for a freezing winter that saw boilers pushed to their limits.

These initiatives have made a very real impact, with clear evidence of increased safety awareness, boiler servicing and the fitting of CO detectors.

Our vision

Safety is firmly at the top of our agenda, highlighted by our corporate vision of:

‘... delivering unparalleled safety, reliability and efficiency, vital to the wellbeing of our customers and communities.’

Our challenge

Since our last application we commissioned two surveys (run by ‘Opinion Matters’) to identify exactly where our biggest safety challenges lie and the areas we need to prioritise. The results revealed two groups particularly at risk:

- **Students:** The online survey of over 1,000 students (Sept 2010) showed that 74% don’t have an audible CO (Carbon Monoxide) alarm in their current rented property, and over 43% would not recognise

the symptoms of CO poisoning. Equally worrying, 57% haven’t been supplied with an annual gas safety certificate from their landlord – something required by law.

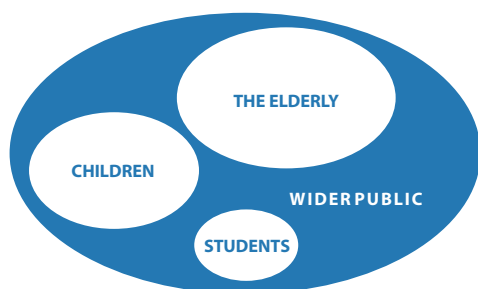
- **Elderly:** The online survey of 71,350+ respondents (January 2011) showed that although their understanding of the symptoms of CO poisoning was generally good, 61% of those surveyed do not have an audible CO alarm and 37% have not (or do not know if they have) had their gas boiler checked and serviced by a registered engineer in the last year.

Furthermore, the extraordinarily low temperatures this winter have meant gas and boiler usage has been at an all-time high, increasing the risk of breakdown or faults, placing these already vulnerable groups at even greater risk.

Engaging the nation

Responding to our challenge

2010/2011 was the most prolific year in our history for safety campaigns with more initiatives reaching more segments of society than ever before, where we literally engaged the nation.



A major sector first in Staffordshire

In February we launched a trial scheme in Staffordshire, an area identified as a CO hotspot by the Gas Safety Trust. The scheme uses instances where engineers visit households in response to emergency call-outs as an opportunity to improve public safety. During their visits our engineers:

- Provide and help fit CO alarms.
- Share National Grid’s key messages about gas and CO leaks, such as signs, symptoms and the number to call.

- Leave behind useful information packs.

The scheme is the first of its kind in the sector, and is being extended to reach 2,000 homes. (see supporting pages for customer comments)

Engaging students in gas safety

Grabbing the attention of students, especially when it relates to something like safety is no simple task. Therefore, this year’s Student Gas Safety Campaign took student engagement one step further by harnessing social media and a celebrity personality students can relate to. We enlisted award-winning comedian Greg Davies (Mr Gilbert in cult series, The Inbetweeners) to star in a series of nine short safety videos, filmed in a typical student house in a series of improvised comic scenarios to get our gas safety messages across.

The videos were uploaded to National Grid’s Facebook Page and website as well as YouTube and word spread quickly with over **34,000 students viewing the films.**

To kick-start the campaign, Greg conducted a series of interviews including talkSPORT, Sky News Radio, Kiss and Magic. We also ran a series of radio and online ‘Student Survival’ competitions with media such as thesun.co.uk and Nuts magazine online generating even more hits to the National Grid site, which at the peak of the campaign was attracting **over 33,000 active monthly users.**

We invested £97,000 in the campaign but achieved **media coverage worth over £570k** through particularly effective use of PR.

Engaging children in gas safety

We know there is no power like pester power. By educating children about gas safety, they will in turn take the gas safety message back home and influence all family members. We also know from our research that some of the lowest awareness of the gas emergency number is among the younger age group. We needed an engaging and fun way to reach a large number of this section of society.

We therefore sponsored the Cub Scout's Home Safety Badge and included our valuable gas safety advice in the eight activities required to earn the badge. With 16 million supporters and one in four of all boys aged 8-10 being a member, the National Grid sponsorship has proven a great vehicle for communicating to this impressionable age group. Already over 120,000 Cubs have taken up the challenge.



Safer Homes week initiative 2011

In February 2011, we teamed up with (RoSPA) to launch Safer Homes Week. We used research and radio and press to raise safety awareness for the elderly using the cooperation of their younger relatives.

The message was to ask people to do three things for an elderly relative:

- Make sure their gas appliances are checked on an annual basis.
- Ensure they know to call the national gas emergency number if they smell gas.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm and a smoke detector.

A nation engaged

The Safer Homes Week and CO detector campaigns reached a vast audience totalling over 48million:

- 176 short television appearances and 154 radio appearances had a combined potential reach of 32 million people.
- 22 major websites (like the Sun website) extended reach by a further 9.9m.
- Our radio adverts also reached a potential audience of over 2m and our radio competition achieved 30 radio appearances, reaching up to 4m listeners.

Innovative use of social media

We are leading the industry in the use of social media and have chosen to do so in support of our safety campaigns:

- Over 34,000 students viewed our video clips in YouTube and over 800 joined our student safety Facebook group.

Calling students to action

After the student safety campaign independent research of students via Opinion Matters, was carried out and found:

- 97% said the campaign was effective.
- 40% have gained a better awareness and understanding of CO poisoning in the two month campaign period.
- 12% have since urged their landlord to get their boiler serviced.
- 11% have bought a CO alarm, or asked their landlord to buy one.
- 3% of students who took part have since reported a potential CO leak.

Increasing the use of CO detectors

About 50 people die each year from accidental CO poisoning. This year has seen us launch a major national campaign to increase the use of CO detectors in homes supported by:

- An advertisement promoting the national gas emergency service to the general public, which appeared on ITV and its digital channels over the festive period.



- Year-round PR, focusing on reminding the public of what to do in a gas emergency. For example, National Grid and RoSPA spokespeople took part in audio features sold into radio stations, and radio competitions with prizes of audio CO alarms, smoke detectors and a radio.
- Broadcasting of a radio advert over the same period to remind people what to do if they smell gas.
- Offering discounted CO alarms to all 12,000 employees.

- Twitter is used to communicate with customers during emergency incidents. 347 people have made use of this service.
- In all 1,643 Facebook users "Like" us in Facebook for our two groups (company and student). Nearly 20 times more than all other GDNs put together.

Stakeholder engagement

In November 2010 National Grid became the first GDN to have a dedicated RIIIO stakeholder event targeting vulnerable and fuel poor customers which included voluntary groups such as Age UK and Citizen's Advice Bureau. This event considered the safety issues facing this vulnerable group. Other GDNs have now followed our lead with stakeholder engagement events.

We also actively support the Energy Networks Association with their initiative "Carbon Monoxide Be Alarmed". We are the only GDN to do a large scale trial of this initiative. We are confident that other GDNs will follow this model.

The impact of the Safer Homes Week

- 30.7% of those surveyed have gained a better awareness and understanding of CO poisoning.
- 9.2% have become more aware of the National Gas Emergency Service freephone 0800 111 999.
- 8.4% have familiarised themselves with how to turn off gas within their property.
- 13.6% have got their gas boiler serviced.
- 8.1% have bought an audible CO alarm.

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Supporting Document



Examples of online traffic & engagement - Framlingham Incident

Natalie Gorniak
 Many thanks to all of you too for all your help! Was very helpful having a facebook page giving us updates!

Kate Mawson
 You guys have all been fantastic. I am so impressed with the calm, efficient and friendly way you are handling this. Thank you.

Customer feedback regarding our sector first in Staffordshire

Spontaneous (anonymous) comments from customers in our customer survey include the following:

"A worthwhile provision especially to disabled or elderly"

"If everyone listened to what the engineer had to say the world would be a better place. I am very grateful."

"I think this is an excellent trial. We were not fully aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide and wish to thank you for our detector"

"I just want to say thank you for the marvellous service. The gentleman was here within 30 minutes and he was lovely. Thank you I'm 88 and was very impressed"

"The leaflets were good but the gentleman talking to me about the detector really made me understand especially about the colour of the flame which he kindly repeated for me if monoxide is present. Thank you for my gift."

"Useful, very satisfying to know that everything is ok and feel more safe"

"We feel a lot safer since NG's visit"

"Being provided with a CO detector made us feel more secure especially for our young daughter as it will alert us in case a dangerous situation occurs."

Results from a survey following the trial scheme in Staffordshire showed:

- Average CO and gas emergency knowledge score (out of 10) has risen from 4.1 to 7.7.
- 77% of customers have discussed CO with family or friends since the visit.
- 61% have had appliances serviced or checked since the visit.
- The average score for "how valuable was the provision of the CO detector" was 9.7 out of 10.
- The overall experience earned an average score of 9.5 out of 10.

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Our competition on The Sun's website



How to gain the Home Safety Badge



Reaching the wider public with television advertising:



Our recent television advertising campaign explaining what people should do if they smell gas



A "National Grid Student Union" Fan Page on Facebook



Photograph of Greg Davies joining forces with National Grid to raise awareness amongst students about CO poisoning.



The National Grid and Greg Davies Student Safety Video on YouTube