



# Preparing for a Power Cut or Emergency

How to Prepare Yourself and Your Family

‘Get it Right, First Time, Every Time’

## Western Power Distribution - Who We Are

Western Power Distribution (WPD) is the Electricity Distribution Network Operator for the Midlands, South West and South Wales. We are not an electricity supplier (the company that you pay your electricity bill to). We operate the electricity network of poles and pylons, overhead lines, underground cables and substations. We are responsible for the safe delivery of a reliable power supply to 7.8m customers across a 55,300sq km area. If you live in one of the above areas and suffer a power cut, we are the company you would call.

Our network spans the width of the country from Penzance in Cornwall, to Skegness on the East Coast and consists of 221,000km of overhead lines and underground cables and 185,000 substations.

We are regulated by OFGEM (the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets).

We are extremely proud to have held the Government's Charter Mark scheme accolade every year since 1992. This has now been replaced by the Customer Service Excellence Standard, which we hold and are reassessed against every year.

We are committed to providing a safe and reliable electricity supply to our customers and we constantly strive to provide the highest levels of service possible.



### Company Ethos

- Take personal responsibility
- Work with others to find a solution
- Follow the problem until the end
- Keep the customer informed
- Treat customers the way you would like to be treated



## Our Promises to You

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We believe our customers deserve the best performance from us at all times. To achieve this we strive for excellence and we have set ourselves five key goals:

- 1) Your safety** - The safety of our customers and employees is paramount, as shown by our safety record.
- 2) Network reliability** - We understand a loss of electricity supply can be inconvenient and disruptive at any time of the day or night. We therefore invest in the network to continually improve its reliability and stay ahead of our performance targets.
- 3) Excellent customer service** - We are proud of our reputation as one of the leading electricity distribution companies, with the highest overall customer satisfaction in the industry\*.
- 4) Business efficiency** - We are recognised for the delivery of highly efficient and effective customer service. We are investing in innovative technologies to improve reliability and business efficiency in all areas of the company.
- 5) Protect the environment** - Environmental responsibilities are taken seriously at WPD and we are constantly developing advanced technical solutions to reduce power cuts and our carbon footprint.

### Contacting Us

**Emergency Contact Information** - (Available 24/7, 365 days a year)

**0800 6783 105** or call **105**

**General Enquiries** - (Available during normal working hours)

**0800 0963 080**

**If you are deaf or hard of hearing and require the text relay service, please call using our 18001 prefix before each of these numbers.**

\*Source = Ofgem Broad Measure of Customer Satisfaction 2012/13

## Power Cuts

Power cuts do happen from time to time, often due to circumstances beyond our control. We understand the inconvenience of a loss of electricity and strive to provide a safe and reliable supply to each of our 7.8m customers, regardless of where you live or the size of your home or business.

In the event of an unscheduled power cut, we aim to keep you informed and offer help and advice. This booklet aims to ensure your safety and help you to prepare and plan ahead of any possible power cut or emergency.

### Simple Checks Before Contacting Us

Before contacting our 24/7 Operations Centre, we ask customers to take a few simple steps if able to:

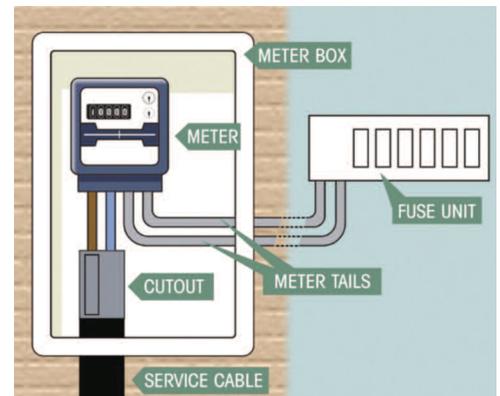
- Check with neighbours to see if the power cut is within your neighbourhood or your property
- Check the fuse box located within your property in case fuses have blown
- Check the electricity meter which can be located either internally or externally

As a customer, you are responsible for the replacement of fuses within the fuse unit, in addition to the maintenance of internal electrical appliances by a qualified electrician.

The distribution network operator (WPD) and meter operators acting on behalf of the electricity supplier, are able to work on the cutout and meter.

The diagram shows a typical external electricity meter located within domestic properties and small businesses.

**We strongly advise customers to avoid touching electricity meters and steer clear of water in which the meter may be submerged, during flood events.**



**If you are experiencing a power cut please dial 105 or visit:  
<http://www.westernpower.co.uk> to review our power cut map for the latest information.**

## Customer Preparation

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### Prior to a Power Cut

Power cuts may happen any time of day or night so we recommend you and your family are prepared. Following these simple tips will ensure you can quickly and safely find the things you need, especially during the night; or help to ensure your safety in an emergency.

- Keep a torch handy and avoid using candles or paraffin heaters
- Keep a wind-up/battery/solar powered radio ready so you can listen to local radio updates
- Keep an analogue phone or charged mobile phone to hand, as many modern telephones, especially digital or cordless ones, won't work without power
- Protect sensitive electrical equipment (e.g. computers) with a surge protector plug
- Make sure any work on your computer is backed-up and saved regularly
- If you have a mains-operated stair lift, check if there is a manual release handle that can be used to return the stair lift safely to ground level if it stops working
- Make sure any medical equipment you have at home has a battery back-up
- Speak to neighbours about their plans if a power cut was to occur and check if between you, you have a means of cooking and access to hot water using gas appliances etc. Also swap telephone numbers for use if needed
- Ensure vulnerable neighbours have sufficient supplies and a means of contacting friends or relatives in an emergency
- If you, a member of your family, or a neighbour depend on electricity for medical equipment or communications, and would become vulnerable during a power cut, ensure they are signed up to our Priority Services Register (please see page 8 for more information)



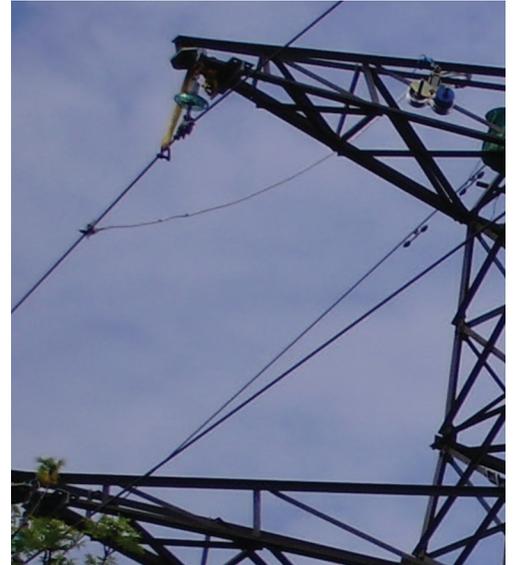
**If an interruption to the power supply is scheduled for maintenance work, we aim to notify you five days in advance to minimise disruption.**

## Customer Preparation

### During a Power Cut

In the event of a power cut we work hard to restore the supply to your area as quickly as possible. However, to ensure your safety and minimise disruption, we advise you to take the following actions:

- Check with neighbours or look at street lights to see if the problem is affecting a wider area or if it may be an issue with fuses within your property
- Check that the trip switch in your fuse box is in the 'on' position. If it has operated, switch off all of your appliances and attempt to reset the switch to the 'on' position. If it has not operated, please call our 24/7 Contact Centre to report the issue using the details on page 2
- Keep your freezer closed. Depending upon the type, they could remain cold if unopened for up to 12 hours. You may also be able to claim for spoilt freezer contents on your home insurance
- Turn off any sensitive equipment, such as computers or fax machines
- Keep in contact with neighbours if gas supplies to appliances are available. They may be able to help you by providing gas for cooking and making warm drinks etc.
- Check on vulnerable neighbours (if possible) to ensure they are warm, any medical equipment is working and they have sufficient food and drink supplies
- Use our 24/7 Contact Centre to inform us of any difficulties you, your family or neighbours may be having. Arrangements can be made with the British Red Cross to provide help to vulnerable people



Please do not assume we know you have no power. Call us as soon as possible and we may also be able to tell you when we expect your electricity to be restored.



## Safety Advice

At WPD, the safety of our customers and staff is of paramount importance due to the risks associated with electricity, especially if intentionally or unintentionally interfered with. The interference with electricity can cause damage to equipment and property, serious injury or even death.

**Always assume fallen or exposed cables are live. Please avoid them and ensure others around you do not go near them. They may be live and have the potential to conduct electricity if they are on damp ground or in contact with metal objects nearby. Never attempt to move lines or equipment.**

If you, or someone you know, discovers an issue with electrical equipment or consider it to be unsafe, however minor it may seem; please report this to us as soon as possible to avoid serious injury to yourself or others.



**Remember: Stay Away, Stay Safe. Be aware and report the following:**

- Fallen or low-hanging overhead power lines
- Damaged equipment - such as broken substation doors or fences, damaged electricity meters, and broken or missing electricity manhole covers where live equipment may be visible or exposed
- Sparking overhead cables which may be twisted together, damaged or be in contact with trees/debris

**Please be careful when clearing fallen branches or debris from your property following adverse/severe weather, as it may be in contact with overhead lines.**

To help us maintain a reliable and safe supply we ask our customers to remain vigilant and be our eyes and ears on the ground. If you discover anything that looks remotely suspicious, such as vandalism to electrical equipment or suspicious behaviour, please report this to us and/or the police as such matters are taken seriously to ensure the safety of yourself and others.



## Are You Ready?

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Thinking ahead and being prepared for an emergency is vital. It can help families and communities cope, vulnerable people feel reassured; and help to ensure the safety of you and your loved ones.

- Understand the risks
- Make a plan for you and your family
- Prepare an emergency kit
- Ensure important information and documents are together in a known place
- Take necessary measures to stay informed using mobile or analogue telephones, or via local/national TV/radio and social media



### In an Emergency

It is important to plan for different scenarios, including a possible evacuation, as well as being told to remain where you are to await further assistance or advice. Plans will vary depending on your circumstances and the cause of the emergency, so it is important to decide the actions appropriate for you and your family using common sense and advice from local authorities.

### If the danger is outside, get inside and keep up to date with local news

- Close windows and doors
- Stay inside until you are contacted by emergency services or advised it is safe to leave

Schools will have their own emergency plans to ensure pupils are cared for, if it is unsafe for you to collect your child(ren).

### If the danger is inside, get out and stay out

- If it is safe to do so, collect your emergency grab bag (details found on page 10) and secure your home
- Add the abbreviation 'ICE' (In Case of Emergency) to next of kin/important contact numbers in your mobile phone as this is something the emergency services look for

**Always follow any instructions from emergency services.  
Do not return home unless told it is safe to do so.**

## Priority Services Register

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### Medically Dependent Customers

Medically dependent customers who rely on electricity for home medical care or special communication needs (for example being deaf or blind), may find power cuts particularly worrying. If you, a member of your family or someone you know falls into either of these categories, they are able to join our Priority Services Register. By joining this register, we are able to contact them directly to arrange the following:

- A direct number to call enabling them to get straight through to us in the event of a power cut
- For us to be able to call and tell them about any planned interruptions to the electricity supply
- Agree a password before we visit to ensure they feel safe



To join our register, please contact us with the following information\*: Name, address, telephone number(s) and the reason you are medically dependent on electricity, or vulnerable.

### To register, please call 0800 0963 080 or fill in the form online

<https://www.westernpower.co.uk/About-us/Priority-Services/Priority-Services-Register.aspx>.

### Alternatively for customers in the Midlands, you can write to:

Priority Customer Services, Records Team, Western Power Distribution, Herald Way, Pegasus Business Park, Castle Donington, Derbyshire, DE74 2TU or email: [wpdpriorityservmids@westernpower.co.uk](mailto:wpdpriorityservmids@westernpower.co.uk).

### For customers in South Wales and South West, please contact:

Priority Customer Services, Records Team, Western Power Distribution, Lostwithiel Road, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL31 1DE or email: [wpdpriorityservices@westernpower.co.uk](mailto:wpdpriorityservices@westernpower.co.uk).

We recognise that many customers require assistance during prolonged interruptions. We work closely with the British Red Cross to provide assistance for vulnerable customers who have been without power for more than four hours and have no access to food or water.



\*Any personal data provided will only be used for the purpose of identifying and assisting vulnerable people or households affected by the specific emergency for which it has been reported. We may share this information with the emergency services during an incident.

## Possible Network Interruptions

### Adverse/Severe Weather

Adverse and/or severe weather has the potential to disrupt power supplies and cause disruption to our networks.

Wind storms, heavy rain, lightning and snow/ice accretion are the most common weather threats we face. Wind storms and ice accretion have the capability of causing widespread and extensive damage, with wind speeds over 55mph having the potential to bring down overhead power lines. Heavy snow on the ground impacts our ability to respond to faults, although many engineers have 4x4 cars in preparation so we can ensure a quick and efficient response.



### Flooding

Heavy rain and resultant flood water on a large scale have the potential to flood key electrical assets. Overhead lines and underground cables are not normally affected, although substations may be under considerable risk if water levels reach a critical level. We have pumps and flood barriers in place in areas most at risk.

### Our Response

To reduce disruption we have robust, tried and tested methods of planning and response; including putting additional Control Centre and Contact Centre staff on duty to handle the increase in calls and increasing the number of our 24/7 engineers out in the field to deal with any network issues that arise. Any planned work on our network is cancelled so we are able to prioritise getting supplies back on. We work closely with partner organisations for up-to-date weather forecasting and the initiation of response plans, in preparation for adverse/severe weather; in particular, ensuring we are able to deliver an efficient response and reliable supply to each of our customers.



## Your Emergency Kit

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### Home Emergency Kit

- A list of emergency contact numbers
- Battery operated/wind-up torch and radio with spare batteries
- Copies of important documents, such as insurance policies, birth certificates, etc.
- First aid kit, including any required medication, back-up power supplies for home medical equipment, wet wipes, hand sanitizer
- Spare keys for your home/property and car
- Water for drinking/sanitation (at least four litres per person, per day for at least three days) and non-perishable food (a supply for at least three days) include a can opener if needed
- Baby and pet supplies if required

### 'On the Move' Grab Bag

An emergency bag containing important information and emergency items, is vital in the event of you needing to leave your home in an emergency. The bag should be small enough to carry and be kept in a safe and secure place where your family members can find it.

- Identification documents (passport, driving licence, etc.)
- Prescription medicine details
- Copies of important documents, insurance policies, birth certificates, etc.
- Any computer information backed up to a USB
- Mobile phone chargers
- It may also be useful to duplicate items from your home emergency kit and include them in the grab bag



### In your car

If you need to travel in severe weather, make sure you are prepared by checking weather, news and travel reports before you set off. Charge your mobile phone, and ensure someone knows where you are going. Make sure you have the following in case you become stranded: snow shovel, road map, ice-scraper/de-icer, blankets/warm clothes, food and water, first aid kit and jump leads.

## Contacting Us

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For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.westernpower.co.uk> or follow us on twitter @wpduk for updates and information in your area.

If you are interested in becoming a Red Cross Volunteer to help those in need during an emergency, visit [redcross.org.uk/volunteer](http://redcross.org.uk/volunteer) for more information.