

Good Practice Guidance Document:

Managing safety issues and damaged meter boxes/boards found at domestic customers' premises during a meter installation visit.

Introduction

This document outlines the principles of what suppliers will do for their domestic customers where safety issues are identified during a meter installation visit. It has been written for suppliers, for their internal purposes only, to assist them when informing and training their staff and in setting out the requirements of their meter installers either through internal training, or via third-party/agent contractual arrangements. The good practice guidance is applicable when installing meters, and exchanging legacy -to-legacy meters, legacy-to-smart meters, and smart to smart meters. The guidance can also be used to inform advice agencies on the expectations for customers where safety issues are found, but it is not intended for direct publication to customers; however Energy UK recognises that advice agencies may wish to develop their own customer facing materials based on the content of this document and are encouraged to do so in collaboration with Energy UK in order to ensure customers receive accurate and consistent advice.

Overview

Energy suppliers are aware that during meter installation visits there will be instances where the meter installer identifies issues with gas and/or electrical equipment or appliances that require corrective action to be taken, either immediately, or at some point in the near future. The responsibility for rectifying issues will in some cases lie with suppliers, some with the gas or electricity network operator, and some with the customer or premises owner (i.e. a landlord, or local authority).

There are pre-existing industry procedures for dealing with emergency situations, such as the [Gas Unsafe Situations Procedure](#), the [ENA Guidance on Gas Service Termination Issues](#), and the [MOCOPA Guidelines for Service Termination Asset Reporting](#) procedure. The industry Codes of Practice/Agreements associated with meter installations (MAMCoP and MOCOPA) also include details of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of meter installers when safety issues are identified during meter installation visits. This good practice guidance document does not replace or replicate those existing procedures and requirements, but complements them by setting out additional advice and assistance that suppliers should provide to customers when such issues are identified, and when the customer indicates (or the installer believes) that they will need additional assistance in getting issues resolved.

All references to 'supplier' in this guidance refer to the energy supplier or any supplier-appointed agent acting on behalf of the energy supplier, e.g. a meter installer. Suppliers are responsible for making appropriate arrangements for meeting the requirements as set out in this guidance, either with their own internal meter installers, or via contractual arrangements with supplier-appointed agents acting on their behalf. Suppliers are also free to implement measures, and provide levels of advice or assistance over and above those set out in this guidance if they so wish.

It is important to note that the act of completing an electricity or gas meter installation or meter exchange does not imply that all equipment or appliances belonging to the customer or premises owner are safe. In the majority of cases, issues will only be identified as a result of either visual inspection, or as part of re-commissioning of gas appliances after a gas meter has been installed. Whilst meter installers are trained, and

have the necessary qualifications to install meters, these qualifications do not necessarily extend to those required for making repairs to, or replacing other gas or electrical equipment at customer's premises.

This Good Practice Guidance Document looks at:

- Key Principles
- Dealing with vulnerable customers where issues are identified
- Emergency issues associated with Network Operators' equipment
- Emergency issues associated with customer/landlord owned equipment
- Non-Emergency issues associated with Network Operators' equipment
- Non-Emergency issues associated with customer/landlord owned equipment
- Repairs to outside meter boxes and meter boards during the smart meter roll-out

Key Principles:

- Whenever a safety issue is identified, either with the gas or electricity installation or with an unsafe appliance or other equipment, the meter installer's first priority is to seek to make the situation safe.
- If there is an issue which prevents the meter installation from proceeding, and the customer or landlord is responsible, the meter installer will advise the customer why the meter installation cannot take place, what remedial work is required, what action is required by the customer/landlord, and agree that either:
 - the customer needs to contact the supplier at a later stage to confirm that the remedial work has been completed, or
 - the energy supplier will contact the customer in the near future to check that the remedial work has been carried out and to make another meter installation appointment.
- Meter installers will report to the energy supplier any issues that are identified with either Network Operator equipment, or customer/landlord equipment or appliances.

There are some examples of typical domestic meter installations at the end of this guidance to help clarify who is responsible for the individual pieces of equipment typically found in customer's premises. There are likely to be variations in the way in which meter installations have been set-up across Great Britain, and these examples are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but intended to be general representations of what equipment is likely to be present, and who is responsible for ownership and any remedial works should things go wrong.

Dealing with vulnerable customers where issues are identified

Energy suppliers already have appropriate procedures in place for dealing with vulnerable customers, as well as specific requirements and obligations for dealing with vulnerability during the smart metering installation visit as part of the Smart Metering Installation Code of Practice (SMICoP).

Where an issue is identified during a meter installation visit, and the energy supplier's records indicate that the customer is vulnerable, or where vulnerability is identified during the visit, the meter installer should report details of the issue (and any previously un-recorded vulnerability indicators) identified and any action that they have taken to the supplier.

The supplier should then take appropriate steps to assist the vulnerable customer in resolving the issue in order to ensure that their critical appliance or energy supply is restored quickly. Where this is not possible, the supplier should endeavour to provide alternative equipment (heating/cooking/lighting -if available and if required) until the affected critical appliance/s or energy supply is restored. Where appropriate, energy suppliers should inform Social Services or other advice or support agencies in order to assist vulnerable customers to resolve emergency and non-emergency issues relating to customer or landlord owned appliances or equipment.

Emergency issues associated with Network Operators' equipment

Before a meter installer proceeds with a meter installation, he/she will undertake a personal risk assessment and a Health and Safety Inspection of the equipment to satisfy himself/herself that it is safe to proceed.

There are recognised industry processes for reporting and dealing with any emergency issues identified with Network Operators' equipment (including details of the relevant customer interaction expectations, such as keeping the customer informed of what is happening) during meter installation visits. Meter installers will notify Network Operators of any issues with their equipment, and Network Operators are responsible for making appropriate access arrangements with customers directly.

Emergency issues associated with customer or landlord owned equipment

Where the meter installer has identified an emergency issue with customer or landlord-owned appliances or equipment, they will inform the customer of the action they have taken to make the situation safe (where they are able to), explain why that particular action has been taken, and what further steps the customer or landlord will need to take to rectify the situation.

Where the meter installer advises that any rectification work will need to be completed by a specialist contractor, they will provide details of the general recognised accreditation schemes (such as Gas-Safe registration, or National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) and Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) accreditation) that the contractor should be associated with, and where the customer can find relevant contact details for such contractors.

If a customer indicates that they need further assistance, the supplier should seek to provide additional support as deemed appropriate.

Non-Emergency issues associated with Network Operators' equipment

Where non-emergency issues are identified that relate to the gas or electricity installation, there are recognised industry processes for reporting, and dealing with such issues (including details of the relevant customer interaction expectations, such as keeping the customer informed of what is happening). Meter installers will notify Network Operators of any issues with their equipment, and Network Operators are responsible for making appropriate access arrangements with customers directly.

Non-Emergency issues associated with customer or landlord owned equipment

Whenever a non-emergency issue is identified with customer or landlord-owned appliances or equipment, the responsibility for any remedial action will be theirs (rather than the responsibility of the supplier or Network Operator).

The meter installer will inform the customer of the action they have taken to make the situation safe (where they are able to), explain why that particular action has been taken, and what further steps the customer or landlord will need to take to rectify the situation.

Where the meter installer advises that any rectification work will need to be completed by a specialist contractor, they will provide details of the general recognised accreditation schemes (such as Gas-Safe registration, or NICEIC and ECA accreditation) that the contractor should be associated with, and where the customer or Landlord can find relevant contact details for such contractors.

If a customer indicates that they need further assistance, the supplier should seek to provide additional support as deemed appropriate.

Repairs to outside meter boxes and to meter boards during the smart meter roll-out programme

Many gas and electricity meters are sited in outside meter boxes or meter cabinets. Meter boxes (or cabinets), along with any board that the meter is fixed to are part of the building fabric (they are either installed as part of the original construction of the property, or typically re-positioned at the request of the customer/building

owner), and therefore responsibility for maintenance and cost of repairs lie directly with the customer or property owner¹.

Despite this, Energy UK's larger supplier members consider that in some cases, domestic customers are unlikely to recognise these responsibilities and could be unwilling or unable to meet the costs of such repairs. Presenting customers with a bill for what analysis indicates could be a fairly widespread problem could harm engagement and cause reputational damage to the Smart Meter Roll-Out Programme.

Energy UK's large supplier members have therefore committed to repair or replace the following items at domestic premises during the initial smart meter installation visit (at no cost to the customer):

- Damaged 'standard type'² meter box door hinges and locks;
- Damaged or missing "'standard type' meter box doors (which might be a universal type replacement door) if the meter box has not been damaged to a point in which a replacement door cannot be fitted; and
- Replacement of non-asbestos electricity meter boards where customer owned equipment is not mounted on the meter board and a visit is not required by the Electricity Network Operator to remove or replace the electricity cut-out.

Where there is work required outside of those listed above, or to 'non-standard type'³ meter boxes, the meter installer will notify the customer of the action required, and also report this to the energy supplier⁴. The supplier will, where possible, either provide the customer with a quotation for remedial work, or will provide advice on where to find an appropriate contractor to enable them to make appropriate arrangements for the work to be carried out. If a customer indicates that they need further assistance, the supplier should seek to provide additional support as deemed appropriate.

In cases where Energy UK's large supplier members are able to carry out remedial work outside of the list above, customers will be provided with an estimate of the costs associated with the remedial work, along with instructions on the next steps the customer needs to take.

Energy suppliers are encouraged to keep a record of all instances where issues outside of the list above are reported back by the meter installer. Energy suppliers are also encouraged to share details of the volumes of, and high-level details of reported cases at appropriate industry meetings where necessary and appropriate.

¹ Unless the damage has been caused by the meter reader, meter operator or Network Operator's engineer

² 'standard type' meter boxes means meter boxes that are of fibre-glass or glass reinforced plastic (GRP) type construction, recognised as an approved industry or BSI Standard type meter box

³ 'non-standard type' meter boxes means meter boxes that are not of fibre-glass or glass reinforced plastic (GRP) type construction that are not recognised as an approved industry or BSI Standard type meter box

⁴ Where the issue relates to Network owned equipment, the supplier will report this to the relevant Network Operator using existing reporting arrangements.

ELECTRICITY METER INSTALLATION – RESPONSIBILITY AND ACTIONS

Supplier responsibilities

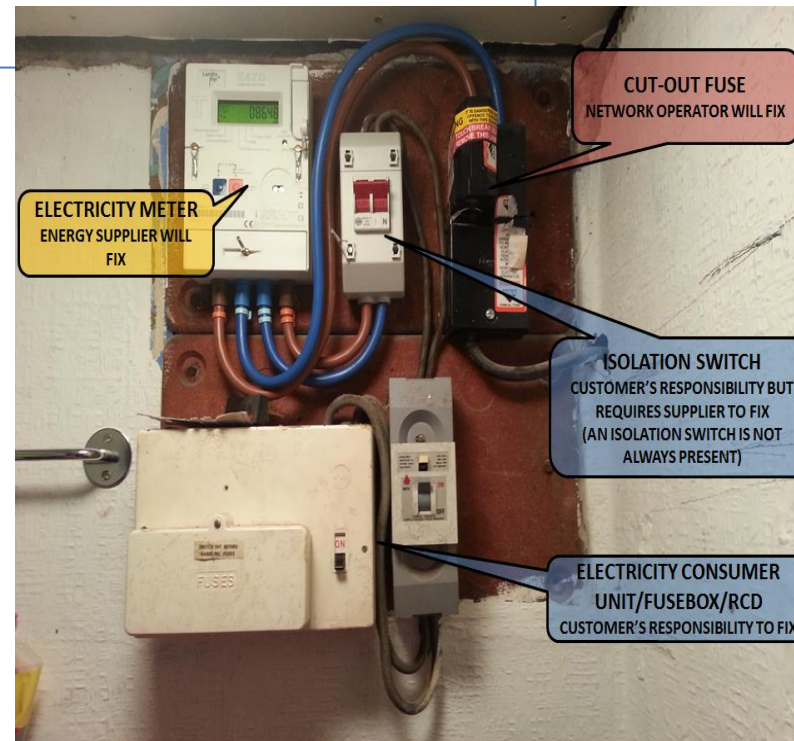
1. Where possible, make safe any unsafe situation
2. Notify the regional network company of issues with their equipment
3. Explain what happens next and advise customers on what action they need to take if the issue is with customer or landlord -owned equipment
4. On a needs-basis, assist vulnerable customers with resolution contacting external agencies if appropriate.
5. Make repairs to outside meter boxes and replace meter boards where necessary
6. Record all issues identified with installation or appliances

Customer responsibilities

1. The installer will explain to the customer any action that is necessary or recommended.
2. If that action has prevented the work being completed, the customer will need to contact the supplier to re-arrange the meter installation when work has been done.
3. In rented accommodation it may be necessary for the customer to advise the landlord of the issue/s identified and action required to fix them
4. If the customer is not confident that they can make the necessary arrangements they can ask their energy supplier for more help.

Network responsibilities

- Attend emergency situations with their equipment within 3 hours*
- Contact customers about non-emergencies preventing meter installations within 40 working days** and advise suppliers when work is completed
- For any other non-urgent remedial work, notify the customer when scheduled



*Within 3 hours when notified within working hours, or within 4 hours when notified outside of working hours

**Exact timescales are still under discussion and subject to industry agreement

GAS METER INSTALLATION – RESPONSIBILITY AND ACTIONS

Supplier responsibilities

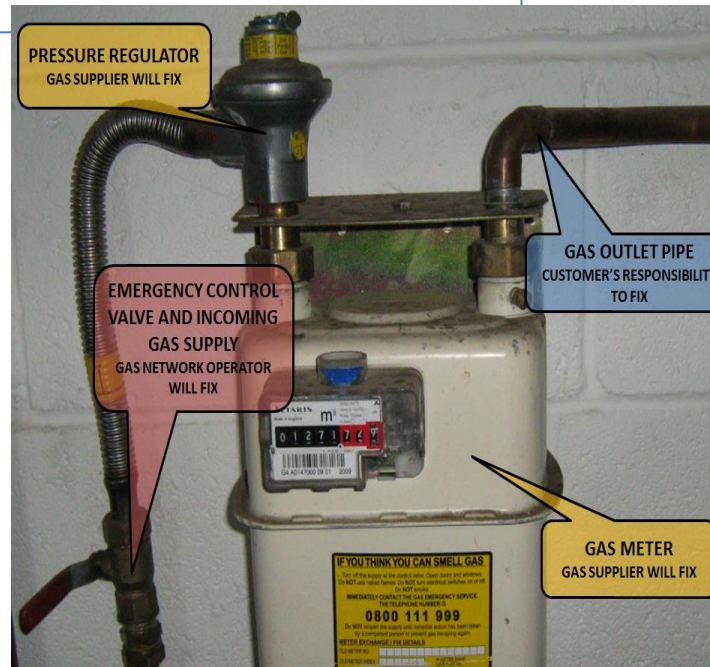
1. Where possible, make safe any unsafe situation
2. Notify the regional network company of issues with their equipment
3. Explain what happens next and advise customers on what action they need to take if the issue is with customer or landlord -owned equipment
4. On a needs-basis, assist vulnerable customers with resolution contacting external agencies if appropriate.
5. Make repairs to outside meter boxes and replace meter boards where necessary
6. Record all issues identified with installation or appliances

Network responsibilities

1. Attend emergencies within 1 hour for uncontrolled gas escapes and 2 hours for controlled gas escapes
2. Contact customers about non-emergencies preventing meter installations within 40 working days* and advise suppliers when work is completed
3. For any other non-urgent remedial work, notify the customer when scheduled

Customer responsibilities

1. The installer will explain to the customer any action that is necessary or recommended.
2. If that action has prevented the work being completed, the customer will need to contact the supplier to re-arrange the meter installation when work has been done.
3. In rented accommodation it may be necessary for the customer to advise the landlord of the issue/s identified and action required to fix them
4. If the customer is not confident that they can make the necessary arrangements they can ask their energy supplier for more help.



*Exact timescales are still under discussion and subject to industry agreement