

## Energy UK Explains: The Smart Meter Network Switch (Radio Teleswitch Service)

May 2024

### Key Points

- The smart meter programme is one of the largest infrastructure upgrades to Great Britain's energy system in decades and is around 60% complete.
- Smart meters will play a fundamental role in a modern energy system and lead to the electricity network being better managed and households ultimately receiving lower bills.
- Britain's housing stock, however, is incredibly varied - from high-rise flats in city centres to remote houses in the Highlands and Islands and therefore several different systems are required to ensure the smart meter network can operate as intended.
- The Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) enables some older types of meters to 'speak' to their respective suppliers.
- RTS allows home and business customers to use electricity tariffs that typically include cheaper rates around off-peak times – such as Economy 7, Economy 10 and several others.
- Households using RTS are typically located in areas with no mains gas supply – we estimate this represents approximately 900,000 households and businesses across the country.
- The RTS service is coming to an end and the energy regulator, Ofgem, has confirmed all electricity suppliers should have completed the replacement of RTS meters three to four months in advance of the service ending on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.
- All electricity suppliers are now beginning the process of contacting their customers who have RTS meters to offer them a smart meter upgrade.

### Why does the RTS exist in the first place?

- RTS was introduced in the late 1980s using the longwave radio frequency to transmit signals to RTS equipment in homes and businesses across Great Britain.
- It allows customers to access variable rate (time-of-use) tariffs, such as Economy 7, which means storage heaters, for example, can be charged up in off-peak hours when electricity is cheapest. In many cases, the RTS equipment will automatically control when heaters switch on and off, in order to benefit from the different rates.
- Whilst the RTS infrastructure has delivered a reliable service for over 40 years, it is now reaching the end of its operational life and the service will end on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

### How will customers know if their meter needs replacing?

- If customers are unsure whether they are currently connected to the RTS network, there are a few things to look out for:
  - there may be a separate switch box near their meter with a radio teleswitch label on it.
  - their property is heated using electricity or storage heaters.
  - there is no gas supply to their area. This could include households in rural areas and high-rise flats.
  - they get cheaper energy at different times of day and are on tariffs like Economy 7, Economy 10 or Total Heat Total Control.
- If the customer is unsure about what kind of meter they have, they should contact their supplier immediately to find out, and if necessary, begin the process of upgrading to a smart meter.

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- Customers should take action now to allow as much time as possible for their RTS meter to be replaced before the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 end date. If the RTS equipment isn't replaced by the switch-off date, not only could customers be limited to a more expensive single-rate tariff, they could also no longer rely on their heating and hot water switching on and off as expected – with the risk of them even staying permanently on or off.

#### Why are smart meters being provided instead of a straight swap?

- With smart meters being rolled out nationally, supported by a dedicated communications infrastructure, they are the natural technology to replace RTS.
- Smart meters will give the roughly 900,000 customers reliant on the RTS an improved, more modern network, which also gives those same customers access to a broader range of energy tariffs that could benefit them.
- Customers will also get more accurate bills based on the amount of energy used. Readings are sent automatically to their supplier. More information about the benefits of smart meters can be found on [Smart Energy GB's website](#).

#### Does having a smart meter upgrade mean tariffs will change?

- Having a smart meter means energy suppliers can offer more relevant and flexible tariffs.
- When customers contact their electricity supplier to arrange their upgrade, the electricity supplier will be able to tell them which tariffs are available once they've had their smart meter installed.
- Thousands of RTS customers have already switched to a smart meter, taking advantage of the many innovative time-of-use based tariffs already available in the market.

#### Can all customers with RTS meters get a smart meter upgrade right now?

- While the smart meter communications network covers 99.3% (and growing) of the country's properties, some households and businesses are in areas where it might not be possible to connect to the national network just yet.
- If this is the case, some suppliers may choose to provide a non-connected smart meter with pre-programmed switching times as a temporary solution.
- As the network improves, more smart meters will be connected to provide a fully smart service in the future.
- Affected customers will need to provide manual meter readings to their electricity supplier in order to receive accurate electricity bills until their smart meters can connect to the network.

#### What if customers don't accept the offer of a smart meter upgrade?

- Smart meters are not mandatory but they are the only option available that provides a similar service to RTS metering equipment.
- If a customer decides not to upgrade to a smart meter, as explained above, there is a risk that the existing equipment in their home or business will no longer work in the same way - potentially affecting the operation of their heating and hot water, as well as their energy bills.
- Energy suppliers are offering a free smart meter upgrade. However, should a customer decline to take up the offer of a smart meter then, in order to ensure their heating and hot water arrangements continue to operate as before, they will need an electrician to install replacement heating controls. It is important to note that the cost of doing so would be borne by the customer and not the supplier.

Energy UK has worked with Smart Energy GB to produce **information and guidance for customers**, [available here](#)

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**Further information**

- [Energy UK press release around RTS switch-off](#)
- [Citizens Advice information around RTS](#)
- [Ofgem, the energy regulator, has energy advice for households](#)
- [Energy Networks Association also has information about RTS](#)
- [How to find your energy supplier](#)
- [The Smart Energy GB website has information around the benefits of smart meters](#)

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