

Emergency Power Cuts Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are Emergency Power Cuts?

National Emergency Power Cuts are very rare – and unlikely to happen this winter. They would only happen when all other alternatives have been considered or used to deal with a major energy supply shortage and must take place to reduce demand on the country's power system and fairly share the electricity that is available.

Emergency Power Cuts safely manage your electricity supply in an energy emergency so the situation can be resolved quicker. They can help prevent damage, caused by electricity demand being greater than what's available, from causing longer-term issues on your local power network which could be even more disruptive for you.

If 'Planned (Rotared)' or 'Unplanned' Emergency Power Cuts were ever to take place, typically, you could be without power for at least three hours at time, once or twice a day.

How would they happen?

National Grid ESO - the company responsible for balancing electricity generated with what customers are expected to use - can instruct network operators like Northern Powergrid to reduce demand on the electricity network by temporarily switching off some customers' supplies in a safe and controlled way until there is enough electricity for everyone; in other words instruct us to undertake **Unplanned Emergency Power Cuts** – whereby we can be instructed at short notice (within 30 minutes); therefore, a rota (timetable) may not take place for the first 48 hours of an emergency and will not be pre-advertised.

If **Planned Emergency Power Cuts** are required a rota would be published on northernpowergrid.com/emergencypowercuts to fairly share the electricity available and help customers plan for when their power may be affected until the situation is safely resolved.

In an Emergency Power Cut everyone would not be without power at the same time. A rota helps to share the electricity available, ensure everyone has power for most of the day and reduces disruption as much as possible while the industry works to safely resolve the situation. Note: More than one million people - almost 5% of households - will be without power at once in a planned Emergency Power Cut.

For decades the power network in Great Britain has been sectioned into alphabetical blocks that can be used if there was ever a national energy emergency and a Planned Emergency Power Cut Rota was needed. Customers are allocated a 'block letter' in the rota, to show if or when their power might be temporarily affected. Every year National Grid ESO and network operators, including Northern Powergrid, test these procedures for Emergency Power Cuts to ensure that we are ready if they were ever needed.

Are registered Priority Services Members protected from Emergency Power Cuts?

No, being a Priority Services customer does not mean that your electricity is restored first or protected in a power cut. What it does mean is we know about your medical or personal needs if you were ever affected by a longer duration power cut (e.g., several hours or more) or, in a wider regional or national incident, we can ensure civil contingency partners like local authorities and emergency services who would lead and coordinate regional emergency responses know where the most vulnerable members of communities are located.

If customers live in an affected area that must have an Emergency Power Cut, customers will go off supply, so it is important, especially for the medically dependent on electricity, to be prepared and know what to do in a power cut. More than one million people - almost 5% of households - will be without power at once in a planned Emergency Power Cut. Due to the scale and size of demand, network operators cannot supply generators or back up power supplies to customers in an emergency such as this.

What might happen in an Emergency Power Cut?

It is likely neighbours will be without power together, but this won't always be the case. The way that the houses on your street are connected to your local power network, may mean you are without power at a different time to those living nearby.

As with any power cut, appliances, electrically powered medical equipment, lights, gas boilers, heat pumps, broadband, and home phones will not work. Mobile phone service will also be extremely limited and may drop out entirely.

What is done to prevent Emergency Power Cuts?

Emergency Power Cuts are only used when a range of other alternatives have been explored by National Grid ESO. These can include encouraging additional generation to meet demand, asking heavy industrial users to limit their demand during peak periods, asking or paying customers to change how and when they use high energy using appliances (like washing machines, tumble dryers, power showers, dishwashers, and hot tubs), and reducing voltage across the country by a small percentage which is not noticeable to customers.

In a national energy emergency, everyone can potentially play their part by following smart energy saving behaviours like reducing the use of non-critical electrical devices and fully switching off any equipment not in use.