

Customer FAQs

We understand you may have some questions about how we're continuing to work during these challenging times. Here's some information explaining how WPD is keeping its team and customers safe during the course of its work.

What work is WPD continuing to do?

We have been working extensively with government departments, Ofgem, other UK network companies and trade unions to respond to and adhere to the latest Government advice. Following these discussions, WPD will continue essential operations across our network to keep the energy flowing to homes, businesses and hospitals, while ensuring the network remains safe for all. We will be restarting customer driven works and our capital investment programme incrementally over the coming weeks.

As always, our priority remains on maintaining the safety of our employees and the public while keeping the lights on for our customers. Despite the impact of the pandemic, operations in our Control Centre, Contact Centres and field teams continue while sticking to the latest Government advice. We will continue to monitor the requirements of our businesses needs and bring homeworkers back into the depots and offices only as necessary, but with the assurance of social distancing measures in place in all areas.

The company and trade unions have worked collaboratively in drawing up plans to ensure that all employees and workers are confident that the company will manage any risks to health and provide a safe working environment during this new period. We do not anticipate a 'business as usual' scenario for some time.

For our network services staff, we anticipate an increase in enquiries for customer driven work from developers, local authorities, and home and smaller business owners. The activities that these requests generate will be the first area where we commence physical on site activities to meet those requests. We also anticipate that the volumes of these works will vary across our licence areas.

Initially our own capital programmes will be targeted to mains cable laying activity, primary projects and specialist contractor activity. These activities have less of a requirement for multiple work teams from WPD to be on site and will enable us to put into practice and refine any social distancing guidelines.

It is important that those planning, supervising and carrying out field-based activities take into consideration social distancing at all stages of the work. In the vast majority of cases work can be carried out safely whilst maintaining the 2-metre separation, it will however require more conscious thought when planning work and when carrying it out.

Will your staff still be attending to power cuts?

We will continue to prioritise emergency, unplanned power cuts and do everything we can to restore power as soon as possible. Customers are still able to contact us through the normal channels and our control room and customer contact centre continues to be operational, while adhering to Government advice.

We are still here 24/7 and there are lots of ways to get in touch with us including our website, Twitter @wpduk, our Power Cut Reporter app or by calling 105.

Will you be carrying out new connections/ alterations work?

If the customer can provide a safe site, we will respond to a request for a connection. We will then send you an estimate or quote and organise dates for the work to be carried out as long as the site is safe to work.

However we will not be “business as usual” as staff will need to work in a different way and jobs may take longer. The safety of undertaking the job is the first priority.

I received a notice about a planned power cut a while ago. Will you still be carrying this out?

This will depend on the nature of the planned work. Where the work is essential (necessary to maintain the safety and security of the local electricity supply) it will definitely continue. If this is part of customer-driven works or our capital investment programme, it may go ahead or potentially be postponed. We will notify you if the planned work is postponed, otherwise you can assume it will still be going ahead. If you have any concerns please contact us on the details provided on your planned notice or call 0800 096 3080.

How will you carry out work safely?

When carrying out essential operations, our employees will follow safety protocols to keep themselves and our customers safe. The situations faced by our field teams when undertaking field-based work are many and varied. As well as wearing personal protective equipment, our teams have been briefed on maintaining social distancing at all stages of the work, including 2-metre separation wherever possible. To help maintain social distancing when travelling to and from sites, we’ve hired in a number of additional vehicles.

WPD will continue to carry out all works under safety protocols.

How are you keeping people safe during engineer visits?

Here is what you and the customer should do when planning and undertaking a visit to a customer’s property, whether there is a suspicion of coronavirus or not.

Planning:

- Call the customer and agree a date for the work.
- Where you need to enter the customer’s property, you’ll also agree how to gain entry and any special instructions the customer may have for our teams so we are prepared ahead of the date of the visit.

On the day of the visit:

- Contact the customer, either by phone or knocking on your door and stepping back from the doorstep when outside their property.
- At that time, check if anything has changed with the agreed plans so that we are able to keep each other safe before we enter the property. For example, a change in the health of anyone living in the property from the time the work was initially discussed, may affect the work we can undertake.
- Discuss where WPD equipment is located and agree how we can access it while maintaining social distancing
- Wash your hands and any work tools thoroughly before work begins
- Follow any guidance agreed with the customer beforehand with regard to access to our equipment.
- Keep work time in the property to as short a period as possible

During our visit, we will:

- Follow social distancing and good hygiene rules.

- Ensure we follow the agreed access routes
- Complete our work safely and minimise the points contact our staff require within your property
- Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Wash our hands and any work tools when we leave.

We must ask customers to do the following while we are working:

- Avoid close contact and follow the social distancing rules. Please go into a separate room and stay there while our staff are inside your property. Keep at least two metres apart at all times.
- Ensure access to our work areas are clear
- All other family members follow the same social distancing guidelines
- Open the windows or outside doors in the area that we are working, if possible.
- Avoid smoking or vaping while our team members are in your property

We have produced a guidance leaflet for customers for times when an engineer is visiting your property. The leaflet can be found here: [Link to customer guide]

What protective equipment will your staff be wearing?

If staff are working away from the public, they will use their normal PPE for the task they are carrying out and will follow Government guidelines for social distancing including maintaining 2-metre separation where possible. But if staff have to enter a property to carry out essential work or testing where there is someone self-isolating or showing symptoms of COVID-19, they will use additional PPE such as disposable coveralls, gloves, eye protection, a face mask and disposable overshoes, dependent upon the activity and assessment of risk.

How do I report a power cut?

You can contact us in a number of ways, such as calling 105, tweeting @wpduk and via our Power Cut Reporter app. Go to www.westernpower.co.uk/contact-us to find the many ways to get in touch.

What are you doing to help vulnerable customers?

WPD is taking steps to support the national effort to help the most vulnerable in our society at this difficult time. Each year, WPD proactively contacts over 1 million of our customers who are known to be vulnerable to the effects of a power cut. As a result, we have very accurate information about these customers, including consent from many to share this data with other key support agencies during emergencies. We will be working with local authorities to share this data where possible to help them identify the most in need.

Our Priority Services team will also continue to proactively call thousands of Priority Services customers each week to check they are ok.

Finally, we are working with a range of our existing community partners to re-purpose our long-standing community support schemes. Under normal operating conditions, WPD funds a number of charities and community groups to deliver energy saving and tariff switching advice to help customers struggling with their energy costs and living in cold homes. At this time, we're continuing to fund these partners but have asked them to widen their support beyond energy advice to look at other ways of supporting customers at this time. Such

activities include providing befriending support and actions such as delivering shopping and prescriptions to those customers we know are most isolated and vulnerable at the moment.

I have an appointment booked, can I cancel?

Yes, you can cancel your appointment at any time. Please contact us on 0800 096 3080, via our website or on Twitter @wpduk to cancel an appointment.

Please note that all face-to-face meetings have been stopped and must be replaced by a video or teleconference call. If you have a connection or service alteration booked, a member of the local team will be in contact with you to make arrangements for this should it not be deemed essential.

Can I still apply to disconnect my electricity supply?

Yes you can still apply for disconnections. We will then contact you to discuss the work.

Have you got enough staff to cope if some are unable to attend work due to self-isolating? and are you updating your safety policies and training your staff accordingly?

As essential service providers and civil contingencies act responders, our teams continue to work hard to serve our communities in these challenging times. We are working with the Government and our regulator Ofgem to ensure that we can continue with essential work, and we have stopped all other work.

We monitor staff levels to ensure we can continue to undertake the essential work on our network and respond to customer emergencies. We have mitigation plans in place to address any significant staffing issues should these arise.

We have put in place social distancing and hygiene measures to protect our key workers whether they are working on site or in our offices, until we return to Business As Usual.

Can I now visit your offices/depots?

Contractors or other visitors will be asked to telephone a number to outline the reason for their visit and to be briefed on the measures in place/agree access and egress routes so interaction between visitors to sites and those working there is kept to an absolute minimum.

Visitors must not attend a WPD site if they:

- Have symptoms of coronavirus;
- Are being tested for coronavirus;
- Have been in contact with anyone who has a cough, high temperature or shortness of breath.

What else do I need to know?

Power cut information

For the latest information about power cuts in your area please visit our power cut pages: www.westernpower.co.uk/power-cuts

If you have a power cut, please call us on 105 or via the many channels on our Contact Us pages: www.westernpower.co.uk/contact-us

Priority Services Register and support for vulnerable customers

If you're an 'at risk' person who has received a letter from the NHS advising you to take additional measures to protect yourself from COVID-19, then please consider signing up for the Priority Services Register. This provides free additional services to customers if there is a power cut. You can find out more about the Register at www.westernpower.co.uk/PSR.

Contact us

Please visit our Contact Us page: www.westernpower.co.uk/contact-us for details of how to get in touch.