

Reference: 01683867

Information Requests  
[information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)

17 October 2023

## Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning data and analysis to the decision that one hour of battery backup is sufficient for VoIP. Your request was received on 28 September 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

### Background

Ofcom's [General Conditions of Entitlement](#) place an obligation on communications providers to ensure 'uninterrupted access to emergency organisations as part of any publicly available telephone services offered'. Emergency organisations are defined in our General Conditions as 'the relevant public police, fire, ambulance and coastguard services for that locality, and any other organisation, as directed from time to time by Ofcom as providing a vital service relating to the safety of life in emergencies'.

In 2018, we published [guidance](#) on how providers can meet this obligation as customers move from traditional landline services to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services, given VoIP landlines will not function in a power cut. This guidance states that providers should have a solution available that enables access to emergency organisations for a minimum of one hour in the event of a power outage in the premises. It should be provided free of charge to customers who are at risk as they are reliant on their landline, for example, because they do not have reliable indoor mobile coverage, or no mobile phone.

### Your request

*I would like to see the data and analysis that resulted in Ofcom's decision that a one-hour battery backup would be adequate for those moved from PSTN, but who do not have a usable mobile signal in their homes to allow communication with emergency services when their home was without mains power*

### Our response

As stated in Section 3.75 of the [guidance](#), Ofcom considered the costs and benefits of enhanced protection, as well as data on the average length of power outages. Costs and benefits of enhanced protection can be seen in the [2011 guidance](#). Data on average length of power outages can be seen in Annex 1 of [the consultation](#) which shows data on domestic power outage duration percentages. This data, provided by Ofgem, shows that the majority of power outages lasted less than one hour, thus Ofcom considered one hour to be the appropriate minimum level of protection for most cases.

Notably, Ofcom does expect providers to be mindful and consider enhanced protection for customers who are regularly subjected to power cuts of longer than one hour, with no alternative way of contacting emergency services (outlined in Section 3.99 of the guidance).

If you have any further queries, then please send them to [information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

## Information Requests

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

### Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact [information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF