

## Consultation response form

Please complete this form in full and return via email to [ipmigration@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:ipmigration@ofcom.org.uk) or by post to:

IP Migration Team  
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Riverside House  
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<b>Consultation title</b>	<b>Proposed Guidance on protecting access to emergency organisations when there is a power cut at the customer's premises: Proposals for guidance on General Condition A3.2(b)</b>
<b>Full name</b>	[X]
<b>Contact phone number</b>	[X]
<b>Representing (delete as appropriate)</b>	Organisation
<b>Organisation name</b>	London Fire Brigade
<b>Email address</b>	[X]
<b>We will keep your contact number and email address confidential. Are there any additional details you want to keep confidential? (delete as appropriate)</b>	Nothing
<b>For confidential responses, can Ofcom publish a reference to the contents of your response?</b>	Yes

## Your response

<b>Do you agree with the four proposed principles? If not, please give reasons. Please set out your comments on each of the principles separately.</b>	Confidential? – N  Please see comments on principles 1,3 and 4 below which clarifies our position on each.
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**Principle 1: CPs should have at least one solution available that enables access to emergency organisations for a minimum of one hour in the event of a power outage in the premises.**

Our concern on this principle is on circumstances where a power outage exceeds one hour. The limitation of one hour does not seem to satisfy the Universal Service Directive as stipulated in paragraph 2.14 of the consultation document which reads as follows:

GCA3.2 implements the second (underlined) part of Article 23 of the Universal Service Directive which stipulates that “*Member States shall take all necessary measures to ensure the fullest possible availability of publicly available telephone services provided over public communications networks in the event of catastrophic network breakdown or in cases of force majeure. Member States shall ensure that undertakings providing publicly available telephone services take all necessary measures to ensure uninterrupted access to emergency services.*”.

In the event that a power outage exceeds one hour people with no access to, or means to access alternative lines of communication, have no ability to contact the emergency services in the event of an emergency. While such circumstances may be infrequent, in areas of no or poor mobile signal some people, in particular those who are isolated, would be unable to contact the emergency services and so be left at risk. There would be even greater risks for those who are vulnerable and more at risk of having a fire, of being less able to react and have a reduced ability to escape in the event of a fire.

Although an overview of UK power outages (2010-2015) reveals that there is a national average outage duration of 50 minutes, the average for Greater London is 156 minutes (2.6 hours).<sup>1</sup>This clearly demonstrates a one hour solution is ineffective particularly in London. More importantly, relying on average times would mean that anyone exceeding the average is put at risk and so the times must be extended much further than one hour if a back up service is to be effective.

Power outage contingency solutions should provide a critical uninterrupted connection for the purpose of fire survival guidance and emergency service appraisal of the situation at the incident centre. Communication providers should be aware of the fact that sometimes calls between emergency services and services users disconnect, and re-establishment of connections in these circumstances requires additional time.

**We are, therefore, concerned that this principle offers a lesser emergency contact service than currently provided.**

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**Principle 3: CPs should i) take steps to identify at risk customers and ii) engage in effective communications to ensure all customers understand the risk and eligibility criteria and can request the protection solution.**

We have some concerns here on the methods used to identify who is considered vulnerable and would like to know more about the factors that would be used to determine vulnerability and how

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<sup>1</sup> Power Outage Annual Report, blackout Tracker, United Kingdom Annual Report 2015, Eaton Corporation Plc, <https://powerquality.eaton.com/uk/about-us/blackouttracker-form.asp>

they would account for changes in circumstance including temporary cases such as injury as well as more permanent changes.

This is particularly important for CPs to be effective in ensuring someone who becomes 'at risk' is suitably protected. Some vulnerable customers may not have the mental capacity to understand the risk and eligibility criteria and so we would suggest that this service extends to those who have a duty of care over someone considered at risk and extended to cover those in premises such as care homes, sheltered housing and other specialised housing.

The inability of anyone in an emergency situation, such as a fire, being able to contact emergency services for assistance should be avoided as far as possible, particularly so for those who are unable to assist themselves sufficiently and regardless of whether they have been previously identified as such.

**There needs to be a robust programme for installation, testing, maintenance and replacement of power outage solutions, particularly for people with physical and mental issues that inhibit them from carrying out such activity themselves.**

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**Principle 4: CPs should have a process to ensure that customers who move to a new house or whose circumstances change in some other way are aware of the risk and protection solution available.**

We have some concerns here are around switching provider. It has been suggested that CPs cannot guarantee their equipment will be serviceable in the event the customer switches CP. This would potentially require the customer to pay for full equipment replacement if wishing to switch provider in order to ensure a service.

**This would not seem to allow effective competition as customers would be unlikely to be willing to go to the expense of changing all equipment. If they switched without doing so, there is then a risk that calls will fail and this would not be acceptable in the case of emergency calls.**