

Power Cuts- Planned and Unplanned- How you can prepare



The storms at the end of 2021 and at the start of 2022 caused devastation and left thousands in the North-East without power for up to a week, or longer in some cases. We have already seen heavy snowfall and we cannot rule out similar storm weather this winter. Alongside that, you might have seen news reports about something called 'planned Rota Load Disconnections' in relation to the supply of electrical power.

This guide compiled with information from the 4th January NHSG Daily Brief has been put together to give you more information on what this means and how you and your colleagues can be as prepared as possible.

ROTA LOAD DISCONNECTION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Put simply, these are planned, rolling power cuts. They would be put in place in the event the energy market isn't able to generate adequate supplies for typical usage. If this happens, UK Government ministers can authorise energy restrictions and the use of Rota Load Disconnections. These are aimed at reducing the amount of energy used, to be in line with the amount being generated.

HOW DO THEY WORK?

All users of electricity are divided into groups called 'blocks'; a customer's block is decided by their postcode and position on the local network. These blocks are then switched off in turn, on a 'rota', for a period of three hours. If the level of electricity shortfall increases, more blocks are switched off, resulting in interruption to a larger number of customers. Once introduced, Rota Load Disconnections will continue for the full duration of the shortfall in electricity generation.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN POWER CUTS ARE COMING?

Information around power cuts can be found at www.powercut105.com you can also use this website to find out your pharmacies 'block' letter. Specific information on Rota Load Disconnections can be found in the [Electricity Supply Emergency Code \(ESEC\)](#) Document (Annex A) produced by the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy. This document details the timings of the disconnection for each 'block letter' should disconnections be introduced.

However, we seldom get advance notice of other power cuts, especially if they are a result of severe weather. It makes good sense to think about the problems either type of power cut could cause you, now.

These will vary, however, some of the common risks may include:

- Loss of power medical devices
- Loss of heating
- Loss of lighting
- Loss of water
- Loss of cooking facilities
- Loss of communications
- Loss of street lighting and traffic lights

These things won't just affect you, but your wider community/people living in the same 'block' as you during Rota Load Disconnections.

WHAT CAN YOUR PHARMACY DO?

- Find out your ‘block letter’ and keep informed of the current situation so you know if/when the rota disconnections are scheduled.
- If you do have medical devices in the pharmacy, ensure you have back up power supplies, charged and ready for use.
- Put together a “grab bag” with items which may be required during a power outage, such as a wind-up torch, wind up radio, blankets, candles, matches, portable power bank, etc.)
- Consider actions to take when/if a rota disconnection is scheduled, such as filling flasks with hot water, preparing some hot food (e.g., hot soup in a flask), charging your mobile phone, put on warm clothing, etc.
- Think about your safety if you need to go out; streetlights or traffic lights may not be working.
- Consider how you can help and support your colleagues and patients
- Ensure you have contact numbers for those you may need to contact in an emergency.
- What about medicines stored in fridges? What is their shelf life once they are no longer being chilled?
- How do we get in touch with patients or clients to let them know about things like clinic cancellations?
- How do we get in touch with colleagues?
- What about patients or clients who may be vulnerable – how do you support them?
- What additional equipment – e.g., cool bags, power banks, torches, back up batteries – will we need?

CONTACT PRIMARY CARE CONTRACTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

It is really important that you contact the Primary Care Contracts department as soon as possible. Do you have a contact method in case of power cut? I.e. email access on mobile or phone numbers listed. When contacting PCCT please advise the following:

Pharmacy contractor code, name, address, contact details & email address
Alternative contact name, number, email address and designation if no one is remaining on the premises
Closed or planning to close
Opportunity to open with reduced capacity e.g. closed door pharmacy, reduced opening times
Reason for closure e.g. staff shortage, COVID exposure
Intended length of closure (if known)
Informed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddy pharmacy • Local GP surgeries • GMED (weekend / public holiday)
Management of consume on premises patients?
Support for other vulnerable patients (daily/weekly collection, care home, care at home & delivery patients)
Arrangements for current acute prescriptions awaiting collection
Notification sign displayed in clear view for public
Notification of temporary closure on social media channel(s) for public

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We have attached closure template to this email for reference and use.

We would recommend referring to the above document in your preparations i.e. do you have all contact numbers listed? Do you have a sign for the door printed? Do you have social media access on your phone?

Reminder of Primary Care Contracts Contacts:

Email: gram.pcctpharmacy@nhs.scot

Telephone: 07979 212453 OR 07876 258988

For all pharmacy closures (planned and unplanned) there is a contractual requirement for you to contact Primary Care Contracts to make them aware of the intended closure. It isn't acceptable to close due to a power outage as your BCP should account for this scenario.

Please

Please inform PCCY ASAP to ensure we minimise any disruption to service users and maintain pharmaceutical service provision across the network.