
Report on Customer Services Standards 2001 - 2002

This Report has been prepared by the Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland under Article 45 of the Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

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Introduction to Standards of Performance

The provision of excellent customer service remains high on the Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland's list of priorities. Since 1994 the Director General has issued an Annual Report highlighting the level of performance achieved by Northern Ireland Electricity plc (NIE) in providing services for electricity customers. This Report sets out NIE's levels of performance during the period 1 April 2001 - 31 March 2002 in the following areas:

Guaranteed Standards of Performance (GS), which set service levels for a number of activities which must be met in every individual case. If NIE fails to provide customers with the level of service required, NIE must make a payment to each individual customer affected. The 11 Guaranteed Standards of Service are set out in **Table 1** on Page 3.

Overall Standards of Performance (OS), cover areas of service where customers in general have a right to expect pre-determined minimum levels of service from NIE. NIE is required by law to conduct its business in such a way as can reasonably be expected to lead to the achievement of the Standards. The Overall Standards are set out in **Table 2** on Page 4.

Exemptions from making Guaranteed Standards Payments, which generally occur when NIE's default is due to external factors beyond its control - such as severe weather.

OFREG Referred Complaints, which occur when NIE customers are dissatisfied with the response NIE has made to a complaint and request Ofreg to take up the case with NIE on their behalf: and

Domestic Disconnections for Non-Payment, where the electricity supply has been cut-off by NIE to domestic premises during the period of this Report.

Table 1 - Guaranteed Standards of Performance 2001 - 2002

Service	Performance Level	Penalty Payment
1. Replacing NIE's main fuse after failure.	Within 3 hours on a working day, within 4 hours on any other day.	£25
2. Restoring supply after distribution faults.	Within 24 hours of supplier becoming aware of fault.	(i) £50 domestic customers. (ii) £125 non-domestic customers plus £25 for each additional 12 hours.
3. Installing a new meter and turning on electricity supply. Failing to keep an appointment.	Within 2 working days for domestic customers or within 4 working days for non-domestic customers.	£25 £50 domestic or £125 non-domestic for failure to keep an appointment.
4. Providing an estimate for changing the position of a meter or for a new electricity supply.	Within 7 working days for connections to existing lines and 15 working days for others.	£50
5. Notice of planned interruption to supply.	3 days.	£25 domestic customers. £50 non-domestic customers.
6. Investigating voltage complaints.	Within 7 working days to make an appointment. Within 5 working days to offer an explanation if a visit is not required.	£25 plus £25 for failure to keep an agreed appointment.
7. Investigating meter accuracy disputes.	Within 7 working days to make an appointment. Within 5 working days to offer an explanation if a visit is not required.	£25 plus £25 for failure to keep an agreed appointment.
8. Responding to queries on charges or payments.	Within 5 working days to reply and 5 working days to make a refund if required.	£25
9. Morning and afternoon appointments to be offered and kept.	Between 8.30am - 1.00pm or 12 noon - 5.00pm.	£25
10. Making of payments owed under the Standards.	Within 10 working days.	£25
11. Dealing with pre-payment meter problems.	Within 3 hours on a working day, within 4 hours on any other day.	£25

Table 2 - Overall Standards of Performance 2001 - 2002

Service	Performance Level
1a. Reconnection within 3 hours 1b. Reconnection within 24 hours	87% within 3 hours 100% within 24 hours
2. Correction of voltage problem	100% within 6 months
3a. Connection to the systems (domestic) 3b. Connection to the systems (non-domestic)	100% within 30 working days 100% within 40 working days
4. Reconnection after default	100% the next working day after arrears are paid
5. Meter relocation	100% within 15 working days
6. Changing meter	100% within 10 working days
7. Meter reading	99.5% at least once a year
8. Response to letters	100% within 10 working days



Guaranteed Standards of Performance

Table 3 - Number of Guaranteed Standards Payments made by NIE

Table 3 shows that in the twelve months ended 31 March 2002, NIE made 13 payments under the Guaranteed Standards.

Guaranteed Standard	2000 2001	2001 2002
1. Main fuse replacement	0	2
2. Restoration of supply after distribution faults	10	0
3. Provision of new supply	0	0
4. Estimate for new supply	0	0
5. Notice of planned supply interruption	3	6
6. Voltage complaints	0	1
7. Meter accuracy (voluntary standard)	0	0
8. Billing and payment queries	2	1
9. Appointments	1	0
10. Payments	0	2
11. Prepayment meters	1	1
Totals	17	13



Table 4 - Guaranteed Standards payments comparison with all GB electricity companies

Table 4 indicates that NIE's performance per 100,000 customers was better than the aggregated performance for electricity companies in Great Britain in ten of the eleven Guaranteed Standards.

Guaranteed Standard	Number of Payments		Number of Payments per 100,000 Tariff Customers	
	NIE 2001 - 2002	Average for all GB Electricity Companies 2000 - 2001*	NIE 2001 - 2002	Average for all GB Electricity Companies 2000 - 2001*
1	2	5.1	0.28	0.30
2	0	68.1	0.00	3.98
3	0	0.1	0.00	0.01
4	0	1.4	0.00	0.08
5	6	20.7	0.84	1.21
6	1	0.9	0.14	0.05
7	0	4.2	0.00	0.25
8	1	37.0	0.14	2.16
9	0	73.5	0.00	4.29
10	2	23.4	0.28	1.37
11	1	3.5	0.14	0.20
TOTALS	13	237.9	1.83	13.9

* Comparison is made against all GB Electricity Companies' figures for 2000 - 2001 as the GB figures for 2001 - 2002 were not available to Ofreg at the time this Report was published.

Overall Standards of Performance

Table 5 - Overall Standards of Performance comparison

Table 5 shows that for the period ended 31 March 2002 NIE has achieved or bettered nine out of ten of the individual targets set for each Overall Standard.

OS	Service	Target	Achieved 2001 – 2002
1a. 1b.	Reconnection within 3 hours Reconnection within 24 hours	87% 100%	87.06% 100%
2.	Correction of voltage fault	100%	100%
3a. 3b.	Connection to the systems (domestic) Connection to the systems (non-domestic)	100% 100%	100% 100%
4.	Reconnection after default	100%	100%
5.	Meter relocation	100%	100%
6.	Changing meter	100%	100%
7.	Meter reading	99.5%	99.52%
8.	Response to letters	100%	99.89%



Table 6 - Overall Standard comparison with all GB electricity companies

Table 6 indicates that NIE's performance either equalled or bettered the aggregated performance for Electricity Companies in Great Britain in 9 out of the 10 Overall Standards.

OS	Service	NIE 2001 2002	Average for all GB Companies 2000 - 2001*
1a.	Reconnection within 3 hours	87.06%	89.1%
1b.	Reconnection within 24 hours	100%	99.6%
2.	Correction of voltage fault	100%	97.6%
3a.	Connection to the systems (domestic)	100%	100%
3b.	Connection to the systems (non-domestic)	100%	100%
4.	Reconnection after default	100%	99.5%
5.	Meter relocation	100%	100%
6.	Changing meter	100%	100%
7.	Meter reading	99.52%	98.1%
8.	Response to letters	99.89%	99.4%



* Comparison is made against all GB Electricity Companies' figures for 2000 - 2001 as the GB figures for 2001 - 2002 were not available to Ofreg at the time this Report was published.

Exemptions from making Guaranteed Standards Payments

Under the terms of the Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations 1993, NIE is exempted from making Payments under the Guaranteed Standards in certain circumstances. These exemptions, as set out in **Table 7** below, are designed to cover those cases where failure to meet a particular Guaranteed Standard is due to circumstances outside the control of NIE, and is therefore not directly related to it's performance.

NIE has recorded 5,108 exemptions for the twelve months ending 31 March 2002.

Table 7 - General Exemptions 2001 - 2002

	GS1	GS2	GS3	GS4	GS5	GS6	GS7	GS8	GS9	GS10	GS11
Cancellation of obligation by the customer											
Customer agrees alternative action by NIE	8		1,038	92		28			543		18
Information not supplied to proper address/ number or outside reasonable hours											
Action impractical due to:											
Severe weather											
Industrial action											
Actions of third parties			879						169		
No access to premises			608			3			1721		1
Action would be illegal											
Exceptional circumstances											
Frivolous or vexatious complaints											
Intentional customer interference with plant or meter											
Account remains unpaid after disconnection notice given											
TOTALS	8	0	2,525	92	0	31	0	0	2,433	0	19

Customer Complaints to Ofreg

Ofreg deals with complaints from customers who are dissatisfied with the service provided by NIE. However, it is important to note that customers should, in the first instance, contact NIE about any problems with their electricity. If the problem is not dealt with by NIE to the satisfaction of the customer, then the customer may refer the matter to Ofreg.

Table 8 indicates that in the 2001 - 2002 year Ofreg received a total of 25 complaints against NIE, a decrease of 58% compared with the 60 complaints received for 2000 - 2001. This equates to 4 complaints per 100,000 tariff customers. The decrease in the number of complaints registered with Ofreg is a strong endorsement of NIE's continuing commitment to Customer Service.

Ofreg welcomes this reduction in the number of complaints but will continue to pursue a pro-active role during 2002 - 2003 to ensure its complaints handling role is brought to the attention of all sectors of the Northern Ireland community.

Table 8 - Complaints Received by OFREG

Year	Total Complaints received	Complaints per 100,000 tariff customers
1994 - 1995	112	18
1995 - 1996	122	19
1996 - 1997	281	43
1997 - 1998	221	33
1998 - 1999	230	34
1999 - 2000	153	22
2000 - 2001	60	9
2001 - 2002	25	4

**Table 9 - Complaints per 100,000 Tariff Customers
- Year to 31 March 2002**

Electricity Company	Complaints
NIE	4
All GB Electricity Companies	84*

* Comparison is made against all GB Electricity Companies' figures for 2000 - 2001 as the GB figures for 2001 - 2002 were not available to Ofreg at the time this Report was published.

Domestic disconnections for non-payment

OFREG has continued to monitor the number of domestic customers disconnected for non-payment of electricity charges. However, domestic disconnections have now become an issue of the past, with the installation of Keypad and Prepayment Meters. This means that customers disconnect themselves only if they fail to purchase the necessary pre-payment meter cards or keypad credits, instead of being disconnected by NIE.

Table 10 - Domestic disconnections for non-payment in Northern Ireland

Year	Total Domestic Disconnections	Disconnections per 100,000 Domestic Credit Customers
1999 - 2000	0	0
2000 - 2001	0	0
2001 - 2002	0	0

Table 11 - Domestic disconnections for non-payment of bills per 100,000 Tariff Customers - Year to 31 March 2002

Electricity Company	Disconnections
NIE	0
All GB Electricity Companies	1.3*

* Comparison is made against all GB Electricity Companies' figures for 2000 - 2001 as the GB figures for 2001 - 2002 were not available to Ofreg at the time this Report was published.

Enquiries and Further Information

If you have any enquiries concerning this Report, or the wider work of OFREG, please contact us in any of the following ways:

General Enquiries

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BT1 5EE

Telephone: 028 90 311575
Textphone: 028 90 243313
Facsimile: 028 90 311740
e-mail: ofreg@nics.gov.uk
Website: <http://ofreg.nics.gov.uk>

Electricity Complaints

OFREG
Freepost BEL 2623
42 Fountain Street
BELFAST
BT1 5EE

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(Local Call Rate applies)
or 028 90 311588
Textphone: 028 90 243313
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