

In 7.9 million customer homes and businesses a quarter of the UK's population rely on us to provide reliable and affordable electricity. That's a big responsibility – and with 48,000 kilometres of overhead lines and 134,000 kilometres of underground power cables, a major challenge.

As the UK's largest electricity distribution company, and a leader in our industry, we recognise our obligations to ensure continuity of supply and to manage and develop our power distribution networks to improve services for all our customers. We are taking action on many fronts.

Remote-control and automation

Right now, we're rolling out a programme that will dramatically increase the numbers of remote-controlled switches used on our high voltage circuits. This improves our service for customers because it means our engineers can restore power much more quickly on temporarily damaged circuits.

We're also increasing the use of automated control systems – prioritising circuits that have experienced faults in the past or serve a large number of customers. Our state-of-the-art systems automatically find ways to re-route power across our networks to restore power to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible – often in a matter of minutes.

Emergency supply systems

Our Networks customers can rely on electricity to run vital medical equipment. To ensure their continuity of supply we're working with a leading Fuel Cell company to develop Uninterruptible Power Supplies that provide instantaneous emergency electricity for our vulnerable customers in the case of a power cut. These will go on trial with some of our customers in 2008.



Investing in the network to ensure continuity of supply

Extreme weather events

Throughout 2007, we were involved with other distribution network operations in regular consultations with the regulator Ofgem – discussing ways to collectively improve the resilience of overhead power lines in the face of the changing climate and more extreme UK weather conditions. Every extreme weather event teaches us valuable lessons for the future.