

Safety & Reliability Workshop Report



together
we are
the network

6th March 2019

Thank you



Thank you again to those of you who joined us for our Safety & Reliability Workshop.

The team had a great day and we were all buoyed by your support for the work we do, particularly during emergency incidents. We recognise that it's in these moments that the work we do really counts for our customers and for organisations like yours who have a broader role to play in keeping people safe across the North.



The feedback you provided us with at the event is actively influencing our business plan for 2021 onwards. But we're not waiting until then to improve the way we work. We're already pressing ahead with some of your recommendations, such as closer working relationships with resilience forums. Please do have a look over the section 'Acting on your feedback' to read more about how we intend to use your views to shape what we do within this report.

We'd love to hear about what you think of the event and our suggestions for next steps. This is just the start of the conversation. Equally, if you were not able to join us on the day and would like to share your views it would be great to hear from you.

Best wishes

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Purpose of the workshop

As we prepare for our next regulatory period, Northern Gas Networks is taking the opportunity to refresh its strategic approach to safety and reliability.

This workshop formed part of a series of stakeholder events looking at different aspects of our business including our social commitments, environmental performance, innovation and the future role of gas. Reports on each of these workshops can be found at together.northergasnetworks.co.uk

Our objectives for this session were to:

- Ensure we're reporting the things that matter to you in terms of the safety of our network
- Test appetite for changes in approach to gas supplies in multi-occupancy buildings (MOBs)
- Ensure that support for customers during incidents and loss of supply meets their needs

To achieve this, we asked you to discuss four questions:

- What are your key safety and reliability priorities?
- What do you want/need to see from our safety reporting?
- What can NGN do to ensure multi-occupancy buildings (MOBs) are as safe as they can be for residents and neighbours?
- What support can and should NGN be providing to customers during loss of supply or emergency?

"Very informative – great opportunity to listen and provide views and discussion"

"Gave useful background into the considerations NGN are making regarding safety, supply and contingency plans."

14

delegates – spanning local government, customer representatives and industry experts

9.2

overall satisfaction with the event (out of 10)

Acting on your feedback – our commitments

The feedback you gave us during this workshop is helping to shape the way we work both now and in the future:



What we'll do now:

- You told us we could be forging better links with local stakeholders if we made use of local resilience forums. We're now reaching out across our network to develop those relationships and ensure the right people from our business are playing an active role in these groups.
- We know you want us to be more proactive in letting Councils know when there have been smaller outages in our network so we will commit to proactively contacting Councils in cases where over 50 customers are due to be unexpectedly interrupted for over 24 hours.
- You told us we could be more effectively using community leaders to access customer's properties, in particular in communities that may be more sensitive to the presence of male engineers. To address this, we have undertaken further research to understand particular vulnerabilities and communities within our network and the community leaders within those areas. As part of our incident response, we will now integrate proactively working with these community leaders during large scale incidents.

Areas of compromise:

We know it's important to you that our colleagues are there in person for Tactical Control Group meetings during an incident. However, during a major incident we must prioritise resources to ensure that the right people are on the ground supporting our customers. Wherever possible we will seek to send a representative in person to Tactical Control Group meetings, but as a minimum will dial in where this is not possible.

What we'll do during RII02 (from 2021):

The feedback we received during this workshop is driving the development of our business plan for our next regulatory period, 2021 – 2016. In particular, we are:

- Developing our plans for capital investment in our network, with a view to increasing resilience (including to extreme weather vents) and replacing our ageing irons mains.
- Undertaking further stakeholder engagement with housing authorities, property management companies and residents of multi-occupancy buildings, in response to your concerns that the benefits of a change in approach need to be better understood.

- Reflecting your views, proposing a support package for customers affected by a loss of supply is effective for all customers, whilst considering enhanced support for customers on the Priority Services Register.

Next steps:

We want to make sure that we continue to get it right and, to do that, we want to keep the conversation going.

Feedback on this session: Have further thoughts on some of the issues raised during this session? Have feedback on the commitments we're making in response? Or great ideas of how else we could be going above and beyond? We'd love to know. Please contact the team directly or drop a line to stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk

Tell us your views on our new business plan:

During July 2019, we'll be publishing the key proposals for our RII02 business plan based on the feedback that you've given us so far. We'd love to hear your thoughts on whether we've got it right. The consultation will be available on together.northerngasnetworks.co.uk

What are your key safety and reliability priorities?



You identified two high-level safety and reliability priorities to which all policies, decisions and activities should contribute:

- Preserve life
- Provide a reliable supply without detriment to safety

We asked you to tell us your 'top 3' safety priorities and you told us:

- 1st:** Preventing gas escapes before they happen
- 2nd:** A rapid emergency response
- 3rd:** Feeling safe during an emergency
- 4th:** Getting the gas back on quickly
- 5th:** Keeping the gas on at all times

You identified a number of specific safety and reliability priorities and concerns:

- Ensuring longevity of works done, particularly workmanship of joints in mains replacement. This is even more critical for PE pipes because they are impossible to detect once buried, and joints can now be much closer to buildings.
- Mapping all pipes accurately to mitigate some of these issues

- Helping third parties (e.g. householders, contractors, farmers as well as other utilities) to dig more safely near gas pipes through education/information.
- Access to service pipes and risers within multi-occupancy buildings (MOBs)
- IGTs not following the same rules as GDNs, which is an issue if NGN is called out for an emergency on one of those parts of the network.
- Safety of NGN's workforce
- Safety of buildings where gas is used
- Safety of works (e.g. road plates with holes in for unattended holes dug which need to be vented will stop people falling in or cigarette butts being thrown in).
- Reliability to ensure vulnerable customers stay warm
- Ensuring customers know how to use gas safely

However, you were also conscious that improving safety costs money and that decisions need to be made in terms of where to invest.

"I'd like to see safety – and environment-specific innovation [funded], because without that I think we would be doing the wrong things."

"I think we probably all expect systems can be smart and part of that is innovation... [but] with safety it's very difficult to make that business case."

You gave us great feedback on our emergency response (thank you):

"The only time I've had to contact NGN... we got a response very, very quick from them... It was quicker than I expected, bearing in mind it was 2am on a Sunday." – Stakeholder from a local council

"From a [UK-wide] meter operator perspective, we have a really good working relationship with them and the response rates that we get for emergency call outs and things like that are probably one of the better ones."

But you also gave us some areas of improvement to think about. In particular, you felt that we should be attending local resilience forums and proactively notifying local councils about smaller outages than we currently do.

"You may have gas outage and it's only affecting thirty or forty people, so to you it's a smaller incident, however, if those thirty or forty are vulnerable... actually it becomes a really big issue for the Council... for us it's just we can do a bit more informing our social adult care, say."

"Northern Power Grid and Yorkshire Water are very good at coming to those sort of meetings and building up that relationship. So, I've got confidence I can pick up the number and speak to somebody and get some information, but it's a lot easier when you've met them at meetings and you've built up that relationship to be able to do that."

"Know where your assets are so you can look after them"

"Let us help you make it safer"

What do you want/need to see from NGN's safety reporting

"If we can get to 99% of things in time, are we just getting faster at doing the wrong thing, or actually have we de-risked things, and then in absolute terms we've got a thousand less per year and that's the best thing for the customer."



You made a range of points relating to Emergency Response reporting:

You felt that the greatest factor in preventing loss of life is giving phone advice to turn off the gas and evacuate rather than the speed with which the van arrives.

One of you felt that there would be a benefit in targets such as attending uncontrolled gas escapes within 1 hour being broken down into KPIs such as 100% vulnerable customers reached within that window, 99% for MOBs, but 95% but for other situations.

As well as reporting Emergency Response in terms of % attended within a timeframe, you felt it is important to show the number of incidents, although they recognised that this might increase because mobile phones and communication make it easier to report the smell of gas, as well as decrease because of NGN work done to reduce escapes.

In terms of wider aspects of reporting, you told us that you:

- Welcomed seeing mains replacement metrics
- Noted that measures currently reported are compliance/HSE-led but felt that there perhaps should be more aspects of safety reported
- Didn't feel that Major Accident metrics indicate the level of risk in the system, they only measure the outcomes of high-consequence risk.
- Valued honesty and transparency in safety reporting because this creates trust, which was deemed important.
- Felt the information included in safety reports and their format should be appropriate for the target audience.

These measures are... compliance-led and they're showing that the business is doing what it needs to do that's legal."

"I don't think we need... a safety report. We're... just dealing with the consequences. So, now it's running fine, it could give me a report that says everything's fine in Kirklees. It's not impacting on me, it's where you... ring us and say someone's dug up the road and this village is without gas."

"The mains replacement [is] your opportunity to take risk out of the system before it leads to an emergency. I think that's the key thing."

What can NGN do to ensure multiple occupancy buildings are as safe as they can be for residents and neighbours?

"[For GD2] we really ought to be just reducing the risk that the network carries... which is, in the event of a fire... you would just be able to quickly and effectively isolate a building from gas."

"[The] thing I feel is a little bit political and a little bit knee-jerk is the stuff on multi-occupancy buildings, which takes us into a different place in terms of risk, it takes us into a consequence rather than likelihood."

You felt that there were a number of technical options available to us, including:

- Sufficient isolation points, far enough from the building that they can be accessed in the case of a serious fire (it was noted that there are challenges relating to keeping these both secure and accessible).
- Stop supplying gas to MOBs and installing district heating or heat pumps (the challenge would be how this was paid for in existing MOBs).
- Remote valves to buildings (currently not used in the UK at low pressure): technically feasible but would require a significant investment (and there would still be residual gas in the system).
- Implementation of sensors that will alert NGN to deteriorating or damaged assets without the need for inspection.

You also proposed some non-technical ideas, such as:

- A more frequent, or a risk- or condition-based inspection schedule on both sides of the meter
- Inform residents when there has been an inspection
- The results of inspections beyond the meter need to be fed to NGN so that they can be incorporated in the risk model (but it was recognised that these are inadequate as they don't cover ventilation or the state of pipework)
- NGN has relatively few multiple occupancy buildings (MOBs) compared with other GDN regions; MOB policies should therefore be managed nationally to ensure consistency and shared expertise
- Occupants as well as landlords need to be involved in education, because they need to know what to do (if they smell gas, if there's a fire) and understand the risks (likelihood and consequences)
- Engage with residents of MOBs to understand whether they feel less safe living there (in terms of gas, wiring health, exits) and therefore whether a change in approach is required

We asked whether you thought that NGN is doing enough to ensure safety in multiple occupancy buildings. Interestingly, 17% of you said we should be doing more to ensure safety and 17% said that we are doing enough. However, the most important result of the vote was that 67% of you said that you were unsure as to whether NGN was doing enough.

One of you said "I don't think it'd be right for any of us here to say that NGN should change their policy without us knowing if there's any problems with it. For all we know, it could be very robust and I think it would be rather presumptuous for me to come in going, 'No, no, no, up this to fortnightly,' without any method or reason to say that."



What support can and should NGN be providing to customers during loss of supply or emergency?

"When you look at managing the scope of what you don't have to do but you're choosing to do for the right reasons, I think that's pretty impressive."

"Should there not be another option there to say case by case basis, because if we say everyone, you'll have people wanting fan heaters who perhaps don't need it."

Beyond providing practical help, you felt that communicating information is very important to NGN's reliability, especially during planned loss of supply to customers. You made some great points regarding what information we should be providing our customers, including:

- Informing people of the duration of the outage (although you recognised that this isn't always known at that point) regular updates are appreciated.
- Who to contact if the household needs help
- What households need to do once the supply is restored (e.g. do they need to wait until the engineer visits their property, what should they do if they were away during the outage).
- Explaining that, unlike electricity, there will be a phased restoration of gas supply.
- Multiple communication channels should be used during emergencies such as NGN's website, the council website, social media, signs in the street, local radio, and house-to-house leaflets.

You mentioned that how NGN works with other agencies could be key to delivering safety and reliability. You recommended that NGN should plan to attend Tactical Control Group meetings in person rather than dialling in as it may increase the range of services that can be mobilised. It was also recommended that community leaders could help NGN access customer's properties where it would otherwise be difficult for a male engineer to gain entry (eg, because only a woman is at home).

We asked you whether you felt that NGN should support a broad range of customers during supply interruptions or just those registered on the Priority Services Register (PSR). Of the 8 people that answered 75% of you thought that we should provide the major incident support package to all customers, whereas 25% thought that this package should just be provided to those on the PSR.



Thank you for reading the report.
We would welcome any further feedback you have regarding our plans for the next regulatory period. If you would like to contact us to share your views, please get in touch by emailing stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk

For further information contact:
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