

Richard Fuller
By email

Dame Melanie Dawes
Chief Executive
Email: ChiefExecutive@ofcom.org.uk

20th January 2025

Dear Mr Fuller,

Thank you for your email of 10 December 2024 on behalf of your constituent who raised concerns about resilience of telecoms services. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Your constituent is quite right that resilience of modern communications networks – both fixed and mobile – is ever more important as we rely on these networks for so many aspects of our daily lives.

In September 2024 Ofcom published [updated resilience guidance](#) setting out our expectations that providers of fixed telecoms networks should provide power back-up of around four hours for equipment in newly installed cabinets. In areas that suffer longer power outages more frequently, we would expect providers to consider increasing this duration.

At the same time, we launched a study into power backup in mobile networks, to start a public discussion about what standards may be needed now and in the future. Ofcom submitted a report to the Government on this in December 2024, and it is for them to consider next steps, and to weigh costs and benefits in the round.

Ofcom does not have specific rules in place for how quickly repairs must be made to specific mobile cell-sites, not least due to the complex range of factors unique to each site. However, we do have rules that require mobile providers to report significant outages to us, and around the continued provision of service to support contacting emergency services. The individual incidents described by Mr Fuller appear to be below the current reporting threshold, but we do keep reporting thresholds under review as part of our work on network resilience.

On the question of migration to digital landlines in the home, as you may know this transition is part of a broader, industry-led initiative to modernise the UK's telecoms infrastructure, and is driven by advancements in technology. The existing public switched telephone network (PSTN) is beyond its intended lifespan and becoming unreliable. In the future, all landline calls will be delivered over a broadband connection using Voice over Internet Protocol VoIP technology.

While this is an industry decision, Ofcom is closely monitoring the transition to ensure individuals particularly those who are vulnerable, are properly informed and protected from harm. We require telecoms companies to offer at least one solution in the event of a power cut (such as a battery back-up unit) to customers who rely on a landline to call emergency services if, for example, they do not have a mobile signal. This must work for at least one hour and be free of charge.

In November, major providers signed the Government's new [checklist for PSTN migrations](#) which includes a commitment to provide resilience solutions in the home that go beyond the one-hour minimum and to maximise resilience as far as is possible.

It may also reassure your constituent to know that individuals with vulnerabilities or additional needs may be able to get extra help from their energy company during a power cut, such as advanced notification of planned power outages and priority support during an emergency, by joining their energy supplier's Priority Services Register. More information on services and eligibility can be found on the [Ofgem website](#).

I hope this information is useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie Dawes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and 'D'.

MELANIE DAWES