

Unplanned Events and Incidents

Good Practice Guide

RWG Unplanned Events Sub Group

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To provide standardisation and clarity for both Retailers and Wholesalers in relation to unplanned events and incidents

Unplanned Events and Incidents – Good Practice Guide

This document is a good practice guide around Part E of the Wholesale Contract Schedule 1, Part 3: Operational Terms and has been developed by trading parties under the Retailer Wholesaler group.

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Target audience: Retailers and Wholesalers in the Water Market

Objective

This document, authored by a sub-group of the Retail Wholesale Group (RWG), aims to provide industry good practice guidance in relation to unplanned events and incidents with a view to encouraging standardisation where possible.

Introduction

Unplanned events and incidents can impact significantly on the operations of Non-Household customers. They often require prompt delivery of information to customers to protect public health and prevent unnecessary escalation.

Part E of the Wholesale Contract Schedule 1, Part 3: Operational Terms sets out the processes to be followed in relation to changes to Water Services and/or Sewerage Services which are not planned by or on behalf of the Wholesaler, for example Emergencies, potential drinking water quality incidents, pollution incidents and droughts.

Lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Retailers and Wholesalers in relation to this area of the market has resulted in different interpretations and expectations of individual trading parties. This combined with a lack of consistency in the quality, terminology and delivery mechanisms used in communicating these messages has resulted in this being one of the top five operational issues identified since the market opened.

The document acknowledges the primary role Wholesalers play in coordinating and communicating messages during events and incidents and aims to define and provide guidance on the following subjects:

1. Event Types
2. Events Tiers
3. Methods of Communication
4. Support Levels
5. Standard Message formats

1. Event types

Parts E3 to E7 of the Operational Terms detail the different types of event. The table below provides further guidance on the sub-types that fall under each category. It is important that these standard definitions of event type are used during communications (see section 5 Message Formats). The event type is owned by the Wholesaler and should quickly alert the Retailer to the nature of the event.

| Code | Type | Sub-type |
|------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| E3 | Change to water or sewerage services | Water quality |
| | | Leak / burst |
| | | No water |
| | | Change in pressure |
| | | Change in sewerage services |
| E4 | Water quality | Water quality |
| E5 | Sewer flooding or pollution | Sewer flooding |
| | | Pollution |
| E6 | Drought | Drought |
| E7 | Emergency | Emergency |

Movement between types (or sub-types) is possible, if required by the Wholesaler.

2. Event Tiers

It is assumed that all Wholesalers will have a tiered approach to incident management that will influence what is communicated out to customers and Retailers and what is required in terms of support. The types of support Wholesalers may require of Retailers are detailed further in this document (See section 4 Support Levels). For the purposes of this report a three-tier incident management approach has been adopted. Movement between tiers for one event is possible – for example, it can be upgraded if an area affected widens or the nature or impact changes.

The table below defines the three tiers of event. The tier of event should again be included in any communications issued to Retailers (see section 5 Message Formats).

| Tier | Conditions |
|--------|--|
| Tier 1 | <p>Large-scale and/or long duration</p> <p>Significant impact on site specific arrangements and/or sensitive and /or livestock customers</p> <p>Opening of incident room</p> <p>Assistance may be required from the Retailer with regards to communication to the NHH customers, and there is a need to proactively notify the Retailer(s).</p> |
| Tier 2 | <p>Lesser size and/or duration, but still affecting a considerable number of customers in that Wholesaler region.</p> <p>Limited or no impact on site specific arrangements and/or sensitive and /or livestock customers</p> <p>Incident room not opened</p> <p>May include event type 'Water quality' where the problem is either discolouration or chlorine</p> <p>Assistance may be required from the Retailer with regards to communication to the NHH customers, and there is a need to proactively notify the Retailer(s).</p> |
| Tier 3 | <p>Lesser size and/or duration, affecting a small number of customers in that Wholesaler region or very short-lived event</p> <p>Limited or no impact on site specific arrangements and/or sensitive and/or livestock customers.</p> <p>Incident room not opened.</p> <p>No assistance required from Retailers and no need to proactively notify the Retailer as issue is kept under control.</p> |

3. Methods of Communication

Wholesalers are required to publish information for the benefit of Retailers and other parties through different media, depending on the tier of the event. Good practice would ensure that these communications are only sent to a Retailer if it has one or more SPIDs affected by any event. If a Retailer is unaffected then they should expect to be excluded from any targeted communications.

The table below details the communication methods to be used in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 events.

| Type | Media | Tier 1 | Tier 2 | Tier 3 |
|-------------------|--|--------|--------|---|
| General | Web notification (eg in named area or postcode region), which should include what NHH customers can do / may be entitled to. | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| | Notifications to registered contacts who have previously signed up to receive alerts (may be NHH or HH or other party) | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| | Social media messaging | Yes | Yes | No |
| | Telephony announcement messaging | Yes | Yes | No |
| Retailer specific | Push notification plus attachment to single Retailer email (see section 5 Message Formats) | Yes | Yes | No – retailer notified retrospectively (within 2 business days) |
| | Call to a Retailer’s 24-hour number with clear call to action (in order of Retailer by sensitivity / SPID density). If not answered a second call 30 minutes later should be made with a voicemail left on both calls. | Yes | No | No |

In summary a call to the 24-hour Retailer number would only be expected for tier 1 events requiring direct Retailer involvement or for awareness that site specific or sensitive customers are affected.

4. Support Levels

It is accepted that Wholesalers will play the primary role during any event and may not require the support of a Retailer. They will however continue to make any Retailer with customers in the affected area aware and updated.

The table below details the level of support that may be called upon if a Wholesaler does require the support of a Retailer and is dependent upon the tier of the event. Such services should only be requested if required.

| Services | Tier 1 | Tier 2 | Tier 3 |
|--|--------|--|--------|
| <p>Timely provision of customer contact details for specific postcode areas (may be through Site Specific Arrangement or upon request).</p> <p>As standard these details should include: SPID, Customer banner name and Customer telephone number.</p> | Yes | Yes | No |
| <p>Provision of a service to pass on messages to customers using information provided by the Wholesaler. Where a specific script is required to be followed this will be provided to Retailers.</p> <p>Method of delivery may vary from Retailer to Retailer but can include IVR or messages on websites or social media channels (as deemed suitable by the Retailer). On occasions direct telephone contact with certain customers may also be requested and this will be agreed collaboratively between both trading parties. This does not infer the Wholesaler can discharge their responsibilities in this area.</p> | 24/7 | If required and only during business hours | No |
| <p>Ongoing incident management support including dedicated contact channels and a shift rota.</p> | Yes | No | No |
| <p>Feedback to Wholesalers on success rates of delivery of any direct customer communications and any relevant customer comments subsequently received.</p> | 24/7 | If required and only during business hours | No |

It should be recognised that Wholesalers retain their duties with regards providing alternative sources of water to specific customer types under the Security and Emergency Measures Directive. In addition some Retailers will offer alternative supply options to their customers on a commercial basis. It is proposed that a separate piece of work is undertaken to further consider how trading parties interact on this matter.

5. Message Formats

The table below details the contents of the Incident Alert Notification that should be sent to Retailers at the start of an event or each time there is an update. A file attachment detailing the SPIDs affected should also be provided. Where a Wholesaler is unable to provide Retailer specific messages any file provided should be able to be filtered by the relevant Retailer to display only data pertinent to them and any communal data should exclude customer names.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| From | Wholesaler email | Dedicated email address |
| To | Retailer email | Dedicated email address |
| Subject | <i>a – b – c – d</i> | Where <i>a</i> is the event type (E3-7) And <i>b</i> is the tier of event And <i>c</i> is the count of SPIDs affected for that particular Retailer And <i>d</i> is the unplanned event ID |
| Contents | Wholesaler name | |
| | Event Code and sub type | Where the Code is E3-E7 |
| | Support level | Requires clear call to action if needed |
| | Count of SPIDs affected | For that particular Retailer |
| | Unplanned event ID | Unique ID |
| | Description of the event | |
| | Date and time of incident start | |
| | Action already taken | |
| | Action planned | Including estimated time of service restoration |
| | Postcodes affected | To as much granularity as possible, but at least district |
| | Customer message | Summary of customer message at this stage |
| | Action for Retailer to take | Any specific action to take related to the support level including any script where onward communication is required |
| Information on potable water access location | For 'No water' or 'do not drink' events only | |

Incident Alert Notification - attachment

The table below provides the contents of the attachment sent alongside the Incident Alert Notification.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Event ID | ID given by Wholesaler |
| Retailer | If attachment is not Retailer specific |
| SPID | Water or waste SPIDs affected |
| Postcode | Postcode of SPID to unit level |
| Sensitive Customers | Water or waste SPIDs affected and associated customer names |
| Site Specific Arrangements | Water or waste SPIDs affected and associated customer names |

The details should be provided as an excel file in the following format:

| Event ID | Retailer | SPID | Postcode | Sensitive Customer | Site Specific Arrangements |
|----------|----------|-----------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Event ID | Org ID | xxxxxxxxxxW/Sxx | XXXX XXX | Yes / No | Yes / No |
| Event ID | Org ID | xxxxxxxxxxW/Sxx | XXXX XXX | Yes / No | Yes / No |
| Event ID | Org ID | xxxxxxxxxxW/Sxx | XXXX XXX | Yes / No | Yes / No |
| Event ID | Org ID | xxxxxxxxxxW/Sxx | XXXX XXX | Yes / No | Yes / No |
| Event ID | Org ID | xxxxxxxxxxW/Sxx | XXXX XXX | Yes / No | Yes / No |
| Event ID | Org ID | xxxxxxxxxxW/Sxx | XXXX XXX | Yes / No | Yes / No |

Any further customer information should only be given in accordance with GDPR guidelines.

Incident Alert – Completion

The table below details the notification that should be sent to Retailers at the completion of an event.

| | | |
|---------|----------------------|---|
| From | Wholesaler email | Dedicated email address |
| To | Retailer email | Dedicated email address |
| Subject | <i>a – b – c – d</i> | Where <i>a</i> is the event type (E3-7) And <i>b</i> is the tier of event And <i>c</i> is the count of SPIDs that may be still affected for that particular Retailer And <i>d</i> is the unplanned event ID |

| | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|---|
| Contents | Wholesaler name | |
| | Event Code and sub-type | Where the Code is E3-E7 |
| | Support level | |
| | Count of SPIDs affected | For that particular Retailer |
| | Unplanned event ID | Unique ID |
| | Date and time of incident close | |
| | Closure text | Reference to any outstanding issues, compensation payments or other actions |

Summary

In order for effective communication and coordination of unplanned events and incidents a degree of standardisation of terminology and methods of communication is required.

This document has proposed a three-tier approach to events and has assigned roles and responsibilities for each. It has provided guidance on methods of communication, the content of messages and their formats.

It is proposed that this document forms a good practice guide for Wholesalers and Retailers for this area of the market.