

# Compliance update

## Timeframes for the installation and repair of meters for small customers

Issued: July 2020

Rules imposing timeframes for the installation of new metering installations and replacement of malfunctioning metering installations came into effect on 1 February 2019. On 21 July 2020, rules for customers with shared fusing that impose meter installation timeframes for retailers and metering coordinators, and timeframes for distributors to carry out planned interruptions to enable the meter installation came into effect. These obligations are set out in the National Electricity Rules (**Electricity Rules**) and the National Energy Retail Rules (**Retail Rules**). The rules apply to small customers, which are typically residential or small business customers. They do not apply to retailer-led installations such as meter deployments.

The purpose of this compliance update is to set out the responsibilities of retailers, distributors and metering coordinators under these rules. Businesses must ensure that they have systems and processes in place to manage these obligations to provide timely rectification of metering installation malfunctions and installation of new meters for customers.

### Timeframes for metering installations

When a retailer receives a request for a new meter, it must arrange for the meter to be installed by a date agreed with the customer or within the timeframes in the Electricity Rules. Clauses 7.8.10A to 7.8.10C of the Electricity Rules set out the timeframes, which differ depending on whether it is a new connection or a meter exchange:

- For *new connections*—the retailer must arrange for the meter to be installed by a date agreed with the customer or, if no date is agreed, no later than six business days after being informed that the connection service is complete.
- For simple meter exchanges for which a *connection service or alteration is not required*—the retailer must arrange for the meter to be installed by a date agreed with the customer or, if no date is agreed, no later than 15 business days after receiving the customer's request.

- For complex meter exchanges for which a *connection service or alteration is required*—the retailer must arrange for the meter to be installed by a date agreed with the customer and the distributor (where the distributor is providing the connection alteration) or, if no date is agreed, no later than 15 business days after the retailer received the request from the customer. The retailer must inform the distributor of the request no later than the next business day after receiving it. Where the distributor is providing the connection alteration, it must coordinate with the retailer and other relevant parties to allow the retailer to comply with these obligations.

Retailer obligations to appoint a metering coordinator and— if applicable—send planned interruption notices to affected customers must occur within the prescribed timeframes.

If shared fusing is discovered, different timeframes apply. In these circumstances, retailers are required to arrange for the meter to be installed by a date agreed with the customer and the distributor (where the distributor is carrying out a distributor planned interruption) or, if no date is agreed, within 30 business days of discovering the shared fusing.

### What is shared fusing?

Shared fusing is when customers in separate premises have a shared single point of isolation in their electricity connection, and cannot have their meter installation completed without affecting supply to one or more other customers. This means the supply of all customers who share the connection may need to be interrupted for metering work.

## Exceptions to timeframes for new installations

In limited circumstances where an installation cannot proceed due to matters outside the retailer's control, the timeframes will be suspended. This may include the following:

- the customer has not entered into an agreement with the retailer for the meter to be installed
- the proposed site for the meter is not accessible, safe or ready for the meter to be installed
- the customer has not met the conditions that it is required to comply with under its connection contract (in the case of a complex meter exchange)
- augmentation to the network is required and has yet to be completed (in the case of a complex meter exchange)
- the customer has entered into an aggregated electricity consumption agreement with the retailer for the relevant premises under subrule 5(2)(a) of the Retail Rules and the agreement specifically provides for the timeframe not to apply.

When any exceptions cease to apply, the retailer must arrange for the meter to be installed by a date agreed with the customer and the distributor (where the distributor is providing the connection alteration) or, if no date is agreed, within the applicable timeframe, which will start again from the date the exception ceased to apply.

## Timeframes for rectifying metering malfunctions

In accordance with clause 7.8.10 of the Electricity Rules, the metering coordinator must replace or repair malfunctioning meters:

- *for type 1–3 metering installations*—as soon as practicable and no later than two business days after being notified of the malfunction
- *for a metering installation at a small customer's premises*—as soon as practicable and no later than 15 business days after they have been notified of malfunction or, where applicable, 30 business days after discovery of shared fusing
- *for all other metering installations*—as soon as practicable and no later than 10 business days after being notified of the malfunction or, where applicable, 30 business days after discovery of shared fusing.

When a metering coordinator is appointed following receipt of a metering installation malfunction notice from a distributor under clause 11.86.7(g)(3) of the Electricity Rules, clause 11.86.7(i) specifies that the date of its appointment will be taken as the date it was notified of the malfunction.

## Exceptions to timeframes for rectifying malfunctions

Under clause 7.8.10 of the Electricity Rules, a metering coordinator does not have to comply with these timeframes if it has obtained an exemption from the Australian Energy Market Operator (**AEMO**). AEMO has a detailed exemption procedure guide for metering installation malfunctions that is available [here](#).

## Information to customers and record-keeping

The Retail Rules include obligations for retailers to inform customers of the meter installation timeframes and provide flexibility to agree with customers on a date for installing a new meter.

Retailers must publish information about the new timeframes on their websites and also provide that information in writing to a small customer who requests a meter to be installed as set out in Rule 56C of the Retail Rules.

Retailers and distributors are allowed to obtain the customer's explicit consent to a planned interruption of supply for installation of a meter on a specific date (or any day within a date range of five business days, other than where a person residing at the premises requires life support equipment). If no date or date range is agreed, the customer must receive a notice at least four business days before the planned interruption. When undertaking retailer planned interruptions, the notice must now include, among other matters, whether the interruption is for the purpose of installing, maintaining, repairing or replacing metering equipment for the notified customer or any other customer.

There are also requirements for retailers and distributors to maintain records of customers' explicit consent to any agreed dates for at least two years.

## Retailers, metering coordinators and distributors must assist and cooperate with each other

Distributors, retailers and metering coordinators must cooperate and provide all reasonable assistance to each other in meeting their obligations for the sale and supply of energy to their shared customers. Rules 91A and 94 of the Retail Rules require in particular that:

- retailers and distributors use their best endeavours to make available to each other at no cost and in a timely manner any information or documentation that the other requires to carry out these obligations, take all reasonable steps to ensure that the information made available is accurate and complete, and notify each other as soon as practicable of any material change in that information

- when a metering coordinator undertakes metering works that require interruption of supply to a customer's premises and a retailer planned interruption cannot be undertaken, upon request from the retailer a distributor must effect the interruption on a date agreed with the retailer and the small customer under clauses 7.8.10A–7.8.10C of the Electricity Rules, or failing agreement, within 25 business days following the request from the retailer
- the metering coordinator must provide such information and assistance as the distributor reasonably requires to meet its obligations to provide information about planned and unplanned interruptions and restore supply as soon as possible.

Retailers and distributors are also required to notify each other of planned interruptions under Rules 99 and 99A of the Retail Rules.

## AER approach to compliance

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) regulates energy markets and networks under national legislation and rules in eastern and southern Australia, as well as networks in the Northern Territory. We employ a risk-based approach to monitoring and enforcing compliance with the national energy legislation and rules. We assess instances of potential non-compliance in accordance with our Compliance and Enforcement Policy (available on the AER website).

The AER expects all participants to fully comply with their obligations and to have appropriate systems and processes in place to manage these obligations.

A number of the obligations included in this document are civil penalty provisions. The failure to comply with a civil penalty provision means that a court may order a penalty up to \$100 000 for a corporation and \$20 000 for individuals per contravention. The AER may also issue an infringement notice(s) where it has reason to believe that a person has breached a civil penalty provision. The penalty payable for corporations in response to an infringement notice is \$20 000.

## Good practice

- Keep customers (and/or their electrical contractors) informed about appointment times and other work that may be required during the metering installation process. Confirm appointments the day before. If you are unable to make a scheduled appointment, let the affected parties know right away.
- Before a metering coordinator attends an appointment to install or repair a meter, consider in advance whether there are any meter accessibility issues, shared fusing or safety issues (for example, if it is located in an apartment block or there is asbestos in the meter).
- Where exceptions to the agreed or regulated timeframes apply, assist the customer by explaining why the installation cannot proceed and what the customer may need to do.
- Closely monitor and maintain oversight over each stage of the meter installation or repair process to ensure timeframes are met. Robust processes to ensure accurate, complete and timely work orders are raised and completed are particularly important when coordinating multiple parties.
- In addition to the information about metering timeframes that is required to be published under the Retail Rules, have detailed, easy-to-find information on your website about the process for applying for a meter, and the roles and responsibilities of all parties.
- Ensure customer service representatives are familiar with the new requirements and that complaints are recorded and followed up and feedback actioned to improve performance.

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