

## Energy UK Explains: The Smart Meter Network Switch (Radio Teleswitch Service)

May 2024

### Key Points

- The smart meter programme is one of the largest infrastructure upgrades to the Britain's energy system in decades and is around 60% complete.
- Smart meters will play a fundamental role in a modern energy system and lead to the electricity network being better managed and households ultimately receiving lower bills.
- Britain's housing stock, however, is incredibly varied; from high-rise flats in city centres to remote houses in the Highlands and Islands, therefore several different systems are required to ensure the smart meter network can operate as intended.
- The Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) is one such way that generally older types of meters would be used to 'speak' to their respective supplier.
- RTS allows home and business customers to use electricity tariffs that typically include cheaper rates around off-peak times – such as Economy 7, Economy 10 and several others.
- Households using RTS are typically located in areas with no mains gas supply – we estimate this represents approximately 900,000 households across the country.
- The RTS service is coming to an end and the energy regulator, Ofgem, has confirmed all electricity suppliers should have completed the replacement of RTS meters three to four months in advance of the service ending on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.
- All electricity suppliers are now beginning the process of contacting their customers who have RTS meters to offer them a smart meter upgrade.

### Why does the RTS exist in the first place?

- RTS was introduced in the late 1980s using the longwave radio frequency to transmit signals to some equipment in homes and businesses across Britain.
- It was specifically designed to 'speak' to metering equipment used alongside items such as storage heaters for households to use in off-peak hours when electricity is cheapest.
- Whilst the RTS infrastructure has delivered a reliable service for over 40 years, it is now reaching the end of its operational life on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

### How do you know if the meter will need changing?

- A customer whose meter is currently connected to the RTS network will know so because:
  - there may be a separate switch box near their meter with a radio teleswitch label on it
  - their property is heated using electricity or storage heaters
  - there is no gas supply to their area. This includes households in rural areas and high-rise flats
  - they get cheaper energy at different times of day. Their tariff might be: Economy 7, Economy 10 or Total Heat Total Control
- If the customer is unsure about what kind of meter they have, they should contact their supplier immediately to find out, and to begin the process of upgrading to a smart meter.
- [If a customer is not sure who their supplier is this page explains how they can find out.](#)
- If affected customers don't take action now, there is a risk that they may not be able to have their RTS meter replaced before the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 end-date, and the meter will stop working.

### Energy UK

26 Finsbury Square  
London EC2A 1DS

T 020 7930 9390  
[www.energy-uk.org.uk](http://www.energy-uk.org.uk)  
X @EnergyUKcomms

### Why are smart meters being provided and not a straight swap?

- With smart meters being rolled out nationally, supported by a dedicated communications infrastructure, they are the natural technology to replace RTS.
- Smart meters will give the roughly 900,000 households reliant on the RTS an improved, more modern network which also gives those same customers access to a broader range of energy tariffs that could benefit them.
- Customers will also get more accurate bills based on the amount of energy used. Readings are sent automatically to their supplier. More information about the benefits of smart meters can be found on [Smart Energy GB's website](#).

### Does having a smart meter upgrade mean tariffs will change?

- Having a smart meter means energy suppliers can offer more relevant and flexible tariffs.
- When customers contact their electricity supplier to arrange their upgrade, the electricity supplier will be able to tell them which tariffs are available once they've had their smart meter installed.
- Thousands of RTS customers have already switched to a smart meter, taking advantage of the many innovative time-of-use based tariffs already available in the market.

### Can all customers with RTS meters get a smart meter upgrade right now?

- While the smart meter network covers 99.3% (and growing) of the country's premises, some households and businesses are in areas where it might not be possible to connect to the national smart metering communications network just yet.
- If this is the case, some suppliers may choose to provide a non-connected smart meter with peak/off-peak switching times that are pre-programmed as a temporary solution.
- As the network improves, more smart meters will be connected to provide a fully smart service in the future.
- Unfortunately, impacted customers will need to provide manual meter readings to their electricity supplier in order to receive accurate electricity bills until their smart meters can connect to the network.

### What if customers don't accept the offer of a smart meter upgrade?

- Smart meters are not mandatory, however, they are the only option available that provides a similar service to RTS metering equipment.
- If a customer decides not to upgrade to a smart meter, there is a risk that the existing equipment in their home or business may be affected. Their bill may also be inaccurate.
- Energy suppliers are offering a free smart meter upgrade. However, should a customer refuse to take up the offer of a smart meter, then in order to ensure their heating/hot water arrangements continue to operate, they will need an electrician to install replacement heating controls. It is important to note that the cost of doing so would be borne by the customer and not the supplier.

Energy UK has worked with Smart Energy GB to produce **information and guidance for customers**, available [here](#)

### Further information

- [Energy UK press release around RTS switch-off](#)
- [Citizens Advice information around RTS](#)
- [Ofgem, the energy regulator, has energy advice for households](#)
- [Energy Networks Association also has information about RTS](#)
- [How to find your energy supplier](#)
- [The Smart Energy GB website has information around the benefits of smart meters](#)

### Energy UK

26 Finsbury Square  
London EC2A 1DS

T 020 7930 9390  
[www.energy-uk.org.uk](http://www.energy-uk.org.uk)  
X @EnergyUKcomms