

Cold weather prompts National Grid to activate energy blackout scheme

The National Grid is to pay some households to cut their energy use after activating its blackout prevention scheme during the current cold snap.

Eligible properties with smart meters will be offered cash and other rewards in return for cutting their usage between 5pm and 6.30pm on Wednesday evening, it has been announced.

It marks the first time the Live Demand Flexibility Service (DFS) has been activated this autumn and winter.

A spokesperson for the National Grid ESO (electricity system operator) said: "Our forecasts show electricity supply margins are expected to be tighter than normal on Wednesday evening.

"It does not mean electricity supplies are at risk and people should not be worried.

"These are precautionary measures to maintain the buffer of spare capacity we need."

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Sky News understands the scheme has been activated partly in response to the ongoing cold weather across much of the UK.

Forecasters have warned the UK [could be hit by snow and ice in places over the coming days](#).

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The scheme launched in 2022 in the wake of Europe's gas squeeze caused by the war in [Ukraine](#).

More than 1.6 million households and businesses have been involved so far.

The amount paid to customers varies depending on their circumstances and regular energy use.

Eligible households do not have to turn off all electricity – including their lights – during a DFS period.

Instead they are urged to shut down appliances such as washing machines which can use high quantities of energy. Participation is also optional.

The scheme is estimated to have saved more than 3,300MWh of electricity across 22 activations in 2022, which is enough to power around 10 million homes for an hour.