Telephony resilience

3. Land-line carriers are moving to fibre to the cabinet (FTTC). The broadband service provided by BT is overlaid on the voice service. While the standard telephone sockets are line-powered from the local exchange, and with a combination of batteries and diesel powered generators at the majority of those sites, power should be maintained for at least three days following. Newer equipment may not be supported and a “dial-tone” may not be available in the event of the failure of local grid distributed power. Standard “corded” telephones will generally continue to function during this time, but those which plug directly into the mains, for example DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications) devices, which will not function be useless unless they are connected to an uninterruptable supply (unlikely to be present in most domestic circumstances).

4. For phones that draw their power from the Exchange, telephone exchanges should have back up power for at least three days; however this cannot always be relied upon, and has been known to fail in the past. In addition lead spikes when back-up generation kicks in can have destabilising consequences. While back-up power for any service could fail, in our experience this is very rare, so we are keen to avoid an unnecessary level of concern.

5. It is worth noting that overhead telephone lines have similar vulnerabilities to overhead power lines during severe weather events.

6. Additional information for the consumer can be found at http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2014/02/will-your-landline-telephone-work-during-a-power-cut/