

UKRPA Press Release



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The UKRPA Housing Association Interoperability Protocol

Theft of electricity and gas in the UK is a growing problem that inherently has the potential of putting people's lives at risk as well as supporting consequential criminal activities such as the cultivation of cannabis.

Each year a proportion of residential and commercial energy consumers attempt to gain electricity and gas without paying for their use – this evasive activity often results in crude, home-made and makeshift meter bypasses that often risk the lives of the culprits, their cohabitants and their neighbours. Meter tamperers are installed by ill-qualified people, which can lead to all sorts of safety implications, such as fires and explosions. The cost of stolen energy cannot be accounted for via traditional allocation methods (i.e. metering and billing) – these costs are ultimately born by all honest, bill paying customers.

Energy theft is a growing concern, and Ofgem (the energy regulator) has estimated that the level of theft could be as much as £400m p.a.¹. The nature of this theft is complex, and comes in all sorts of shapes and sizes: meter tampering is a criminal offence and also has the potential to have a detrimental impact on housing associations through damage caused to their housing stock, as well as through the risk of injury (and potentially death) to their tenants and employees.

Working in partnership with the Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT), the UKRPA is today launching a Protocol aimed at improving the communication and support between housing associations and energy companies. The first of its kind across the UK, the Protocol improves working practices in the pursuit of revenue protection objectives as well as improved safety standards. The Protocol seeks to raise awareness through education and provide a means of escalation between energy organisations and housing associations and trusts.

Tony Thornton, UKRPA Chairman, said: *“Energy theft affects us all. This is an important initiative and I'd like to thank Liverpool Housing Trust for their help and support in getting us this far, leading to the launch of this first Protocol. I have no doubt it will be an invaluable tool in the detection of energy theft within the rented housing sector and will lead to improved and safer working conditions for their staff. I look forward to its extension to other like minded landlords and housing associations.”*

Simon Brown, Director of Asset Management at Liverpool Housing Trust, part of Symphony Housing Group, added: *“Energy theft can kill and our staff and contractors are now fully trained to spot the giveaway signs of energy theft which supports our zero tolerance approach to meter tampering.*

“The introduction of the protocol demonstrates our commitment to working collaboratively with key partners to detect and report energy theft.

“Without the support of the Revenue Protection Association (UKRPA) and energy providers this protocol would not have been possible and we are very grateful for their support.”

¹ Ofgem (August 2013), *Tackling electricity theft*, <http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/>

Notes to the editors:

The United Kingdom Revenue Protection Association (UKRPA) is a trade association for parties involved in detecting and dealing with meter tampering and the illegal abstraction of electricity and gas, and for providers of products and services to those parties. The UKRPA currently has a total of 14 members, working in both gas and electricity revenue protection areas across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, also providing more specialist products and services (e.g. metering).

The UKRPA is administered by Gemserv Limited, and currently provides a 24-hour on-line facility for the public to anonymously report instances of energy theft.

Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT) owns almost 10,000 homes across Merseyside and Cheshire. Around three quarters of the homes are in Liverpool, but LHT also provides housing in Halton, Knowsley, St Helens, Wirral, Sefton and Warrington. LHT is part of Symphony Housing Group; the largest registered social landlord based solely in the North West.

Other UKRPA Initiatives:

The UKRPA is currently involved in a number of pioneering initiatives in the energy sector, working with various organisations in a number of capacities. The following presents an overview of some of our recent and on-going projects, we are currently:

- Working with the Home Office and various national police forces in order to strengthen joint working practices in relation to combating the emergence of cannabis cultivation in the UK.
- Working with regional Environmental Health departments in order to combat the emergence of meter tampering activities at non-domestic premises.
- Liaising with the Crown Prosecution Service to improve prosecution rates in relation to energy theft, in order to present a strong deterrent to those considering engaging in this criminal activity.

For more information about the UKRPA, visit www.ukrpa.co.uk or contact the UKRPA on 0207 090 1070.