Securing Access for Technical Assurance Agent (TAA) Inspection Visits

This guidance describes best practice for Half-Hourly Suppliers / Registrants and Meter Operators when arranging access and equipment needed to assist the TAA in performing inspections on Half Hourly (HH) Metering Systems.

What are TAA Inspections?

The Technical Assurance of Metering technique is designed to assess the 'health' of the HH market by performing inspections on a proportional sample of Metering Systems and then extrapolating the findings to the whole of the market.

The TAA inspects about 1,400 Supplier Volume Allocation (SVA) HH Metering Systems (1% of the SVA population) and 50 Central Volume Allocation (CVA) Metering Systems (5% of the CVA population) in every audit year.

The TAA requires a representative from the appointed Meter Operator Agent (MOA) to attend the planned inspection. The TAA may also require the Licensed Distribution System Operator (LDSO) to attend the planned inspection to provide access to Meter rooms and substations, under their control, and for Health and Safety reasons, e.g. to oversee work carried out near exposed Low Voltage (LV) and High Voltage (HV) conductors. These obligations are detailed in BSCP27.

BSCP27 states that the TAA should give a minimum of 20 Working Days' notice of an inspection to the Supplier / Registrant and the MOA, unless it is an urgent targeted visit directed by the Performance Assurance Board (PAB).

Metering Systems registered in a Licenced Distribution System Operator's (LDSO) Supplier Meter Registration Service (SMRS) are known as SVA Metering Systems and Metering Systems registered in the Central Meter Registration Service (CMRS) are known as CVA Metering Systems.

The Balancing and Settlement Code *obligates* Suppliers to provide access to the site and Metering System.

Equipment required on site

MOAs should (where possible) take their laptops out to Inspection Visits to assist the TAA in identifying phase failures.

While on site the MOA should be able to identify when/if an alarm was flagged historically on the Metering System being inspected, and when/if a D0001[1] flow was sent as a result.

This will assist the TAA inspector with the accurate identification of non-compliances while on site.

[1] Fault investigation flow

What is the impact of failing to secure access?

In 2016/17 the TAA could not access 12% (total visited - 1409) of sites visited. This is estimated to have cost over **£59,000**. We report the no access levels monthly, and both the Performance Assurance Board (PAB) and the BSC Panel have expressed concern about it, although they are pleased to have seen an improvement over the last seven years.

The level of no access for BSC Audit Year 2017/18[2] is currently **7.6%** which is a great improvement and the result of hard work by the TAA and the parties involved (Suppliers and MOAs). We hope to see this continue. The PAB is very keen to see the level of no access continue to fall so that the TAA can operate at its optimum level and so that you receive value for money. The following table shows the percentage of Inspection Visits which resulted in no access per audit year:

% No Access	BSC Year						
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18 (so far)
SVA	9%	10%	9%	7%	9%	10%	8%
CVA	4%	0%	4%	6%	3%	26%	5%

The cost of the TAA service is split proportionally across all signatories to the BSC, as with other services under the BSC. However, it is important to note that all MOA, LDSO or Supplier representatives required to accompany the TAA do so at their own cost. Ensuring that all actions have taken place to secure access will reduce costs or, at the very least, ensure that the cost is an effective one.

It is the responsibility of the **Supplier / Registrant** to ensure access is secured and also to make sure that the TAA is aware of any specific arrangements that are in place for a particular inspection. The Supplier / Registrant is usually able to do this because of the collaborative approach taken with the MOA, the LDSO and the TAA.

What is the main cause of failing to secure access?

78% of the instances of no access recorded in the 2016/17 audit period are as a result of closed / unoccupied sites and the customer being unable/ unavailable to provide access. These reasons can be mitigated by the **Supplier / Registrant** making sure that customers are available and know what is expected of them.

No Access Reason[3]	% of no access visits	Approx. Cost
Site visited customer unavailable to provide access	34%	£9,100
Site visited customer unable to provide access	21%	£5,600
Premises closed/unoccupied and no-one available to provide access.	13%	£1,304
Customer unable to find keys	9%	£2,450
MOA unable to secure access	5%	£1,400
Customer unwilling to provide access	4%	£1,050

[2] Year to 08 November 2017.
[3] Year to date no access up to 13 November 2017

No Access Reason[3]	% of no access visits	Approx. Cost
MOA Representative did not attend	4%	£1,050
Unsafe access.	3%	£ 700
MOP Representative did not attend	3%	£ 700
Supply disconnected	3%	£ 700
Other onsite	3%	£ 700

There will always be isolated incidents of no access that may be due to weather conditions or the designated contact is unexpectedly absent on the day of the inspection. **Many instances could be avoided with additional effort by the Supplier / Registrant to contact the customer and pass on detailed access information to the TAA**. Contacting the head office for the customer informing them of a planned TAA inspection may not be sufficient – getting hold of a named contact at the site is more likely to lead to access to the Metering Equipment.

Special requirements to ask about include:

1. Is site unmanned?
2. Is the site seasonal (a school or a farm for example)?
3. Are there access or safety restrictions to the site / Meter?
4. Is a key required to access the Meter or other Metering Equipment e.g. any current and voltage transformers which provide measurement signals to the Meter
    a. These could be located in a locked substation either on or just off site?
    b. Who holds the key & will the key be available at the visit?
5. Is the Meter located in a hard to access place?

TYPICALLY IF THE ANSWER TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS IS YES, MORE ACTION IS REQUIRED. REMEMBER THE SUPPLIER AND REGISTRANT IS OBLIGATED TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE METERING SYSTEM.

Key steps in securing site access (for Suppliers and MOAs)

1. Once the **Supplier / Registrant** has received notification of an impending inspection visit, he should call the customer to arrange access to the site.

    a. He should ask about all special requirements for the site and request contact details of a named individual who will be on site at the time of the inspection and can assist in securing access to the Metering Equipment.

    b. If a site is suspected to be closed or unoccupied (e.g. there has been no successful contact with the customer), he should work with the **DC** to look at the level of consumption for the site and see how that fits with expectations.

    c. If a site is proven to be closed or unoccupied and taking very little or no energy, then this may be grounds for removal of this site from the sample and inclusion of another in its place. The **Supplier / Registrant** will firstly need to liaise with the **DC**, and then with the TAA to discuss/arrange this.

2. Once the **MOA** has received notification of an impending inspection visit, he should ensure that all data and information is available necessary to be able to access the property, the Metering System and ALL Metering Equipment. He should liaise with the **Supplier / Registrant** as necessary to arrange access.

3. Once the **DC** has received notification of an impending inspection visit, he should ensure that he has all data and information available to provide to the TAA. He should also check consumption values over the last 12 months to check for signs that the customer is no longer there or if there is little or no energy being measured. He should ensure that this information is passed to the **Supplier / Registrant** and included in the data passed to the **TAA**.

4. The **Supplier / Registrant** should also liaise with the **MOA** (and **LDSO** if necessary) to confirm attendance and share customer contact details and special site requirements. The Supplier / Registrant should make sure that the **MOA** is already aware of the impending inspection and should support the **MOA** as necessary in working with the **TAA**.

5. It may be necessary at this point for the **Supplier / Registrant** to liaise with the **TAA** because he may need to reschedule the visit (e.g. the site is seasonal or unmanned and further notice for the customer may be required).

6. The **Supplier / Registrant** should update the **TAA** with any special requirements (via the TAAMT, preferably) and provide contact details for the named individual in step 1.

7. Once the **Supplier / Registrant** has secured access, he should send a follow up letter to the customer confirming the arrangements for the visit. It may be helpful to use the wording in the **sample letter** shown below.

8. If the customer cannot be reached by phone, the **Supplier / Registrant** should advise the **TAA** and the **MOA** that visit details have been forwarded but **not** confirmed by the customer.

9. **In all scenarios the Supplier / Registrant should update the TAA/customer/MOA of any changes in arrangements prior to the site visit.**

If you have questions or comments about this guidance or any area of Technical Assurance of Metering, please contact us: tametering@elexon.co.uk

Sample Letter

Customer Address

Customer Address

Customer Address

Customer Address

Date: DD MMM YYYY

Inspection Visit Reference: YYYY-XXXX

Technical Assurance Inspection of Electricity Metering System for MPAN ID: 1234567891234

Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to our telephone conversation, the Technical Assurance Agent (TAA) will be coming to inspect the electricity metering system at your premises. The TAA is an agent under the Balancing and Settlement Code (BSC), which is administered by ELEXON Ltd.

All electricity suppliers must sign up to and adhere to the BSC. It is part of the industry governance arrangements managed by Ofgem – Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets.

The BSC allocates energy used by you to your electricity supplier. The BSC requires that these meters are inspected to check they are accurate. This is done using the TAA who inspects a sample of meters each year.

Your metering system is going to be inspected. The TAA will visit the site, with a representative from your meter operator, to perform the inspection. The results are used to detect any problems with the way in which the meter is set up or is recording energy used. Any problems found will be rectified through your electricity supplier.

The TAA and your meter operator will be visiting your premises [week commencing DD- MMM-YYYY or SPECIFIC DATE DD-MMM-YYYY].

Please can you ensure that there is safe access to the site and that relevant personnel and keys (if required) are available to access the electricity metering system.

There will be no interruption to your supply and there will be no charges incurred to you for this inspection.

If the date & time is not convenient or you require further information regarding ELEXON Ltd, the TAA or the work being carried out, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be happy to discuss this with you.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Need more information?

For more information please contact the **BSC Service Desk** at bscservicedesk@cgi.com or call **0870 010 6950**.

Useful Links

- BSCP27: Technical Assurance of Half Hourly Metering Systems for Settlement Purposes

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