

Western Power Distribution calls on residents to check what they can do to reduce their energy bills



Western Power Distribution Chief Executive Robert Symons addresses Members of Parliament in the United Kingdom

About thirty Members of Parliament (MP) in the United Kingdom joined Western Power Distribution (WPD) Chief Executive Robert Symons in calling on people in the Midlands, South West and South Wales to seek support if they are struggling with their energy bills.

At a meeting at the House of Commons on Wednesday (1/24), they also discussed the importance of building a smart energy system that will help to ensure energy affordability for the future.

“We are delighted to meet with so many MPs to discuss our role of keeping the lights on and supporting our customers,” said Robert Symons, Western Power Distribution Chief Executive. “Since 2002 we have cut the likelihood of power cuts occurring by nearly 40 percent. However, we cannot eliminate the chances of power cuts completely, so it is vital that we know who our most vulnerable customers are so we can support them first. We also take our role very seriously in helping to find solutions for those people who are struggling with their energy bill.”

WPD operates an extensive support program for customers across their region who are unable to afford energy and/or to keep their home adequately heated. It works with a range of partners including the Centre for Sustainable Energy, the Energy Saving Trust, and Citizens’ Advice across their regions, offering a variety of support services including:

- Income maximization (e.g. managing debts)
- Tariff advice
- Energy efficiency measures
- Boiler replacements and heating technologies
- Behavioral changes (e.g. how best to operate your heating system)
- Health and well-being measures

This year WPD has helped 15,000 customers save almost \$5 million (£3.5million) — that’s an average savings of

\$322 (£233) per customer.

The company is also investing in a host of new technologies, systems and skills to create the smart network of the future, including leading the world's largest electric vehicle use trial.

"WPD is rising to the challenge of creating a smart network that works for everyone. We are investing more than \$9 billion (£7.1 billion) between 2015 and 2023 to improve network resilience, connect new homes, businesses and generation, and to roll out new innovations. We also have a fully costed \$170 million (£125 million) plan to convert the existing network to a smart grid, becoming a 'Distribution System Operator', at no extra cost to customers," said Symons.

WPD provides a priority register service for customers who may be particularly vulnerable during a power cut, such as those medically dependent on electricity, those who have a particular communication need or who may find a power cut difficult such as the elderly or disabled.

To sign up for priority assistance, customers can contact WPD by calling 0800 917 79 53. The service is free and confidential. During a power cut, customers should call 105 or 0800 6783 105.

For further information: Dana Burns, 610-774-5997

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