



The role of the Bundesnetzagentur in the gas deficit situation

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In the event of a gas deficit situation, the Bundesnetzagentur becomes the national supply coordinator and takes on the statutory duty of distributing and allocating the scarce gas resources during the crisis. It does so in close coordination with gas network operators.

There are three levels used to prepare for potential disruption or brief interruptions to gas supply in line with the German Energy Security of Supply Act (EnSiG), the EU SoS¹ Regulation and the Emergency Plan for Gas²:

1. Early warning level
2. Alert level
3. Emergency level

Early warning and alert levels led by BMWK

The first two levels are each declared in a press statement by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). A crisis team is set up at the BMWK. It takes charge of ensuring an orderly and rapid flow of information about the actual gas supply situation. It assesses the **market-based measures to ensure the supply of gas** that network operators take at these levels. The Bundesnetzagentur is prepared to join the crisis team at any time and take on the role of deputy chair.

Emergency level

If the measures taken at the early warning or alert levels are insufficient, or a long-term worsening of the supply situation occurs, the federal government can declare the emergency level. This may occur in particular if the market-based measures are no longer sufficient. The Bundesnetzagentur then assumes the function of national supply coordinator (Bundeslastverteiler) and is responsible for allocating gas in close coordination with the network operators. Certain groups of consumers are specially protected by law and must receive gas if at all possible. These protected consumers include social institutions such as hospitals, households and gas power plants that are used to supply heat to households.

The Bundesnetzagentur is carrying out all the necessary preparatory work to be ready for a possible declaration of the emergency level. The authority is acutely aware of the serious consequences of a gas deficit situation. In the event of an emergency, it will hardly be possible to avoid harm, but it must be kept to a minimum. The Bundesnetzagentur therefore supports the position of the federal government to avoid a gas embargo.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2017/1938 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2017 concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply and repealing Regulation (EU) No 994/2010

² https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Downloads/E/emergency-plan-gas-germany.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5

Decisions on a case-by-case basis

The decisions that have to be made in a deficit situation always have to be on a case-by-case basis because the circumstances depend on so many variables (including levels of gas storage, weather conditions, European requirements, reduced consumption, etc) that they cannot be foreseen. Therefore, the Bundesnetzagentur does not prepare **an abstract order of possible shutdowns**.

The authority naturally understands the repeated calls for such a list, as potentially affected companies want to be able to plan for such an eventuality. Nevertheless, an abstract rule would not do justice to the **complexity of the decision-making process** and would not be suitable to bring about sustainable solutions ahead of time. Rather, it is necessary to weigh up decisions in light not only of the concerns and significance of those affected but also with a view to the technical situation of the network and the existing gas flows. The Bundesnetzagentur is in the process of drawing up a set of criteria that would form the basis of **these considerations**.

Communication with companies and associations: good decisions need a good data basis

The Bundesnetzagentur is liaising closely with industry and the energy sector in this preparatory phase. Its processes and communication strategies in a gas deficit situation are currently being updated and improved, with the primary goal being **a common understanding of how different parties interact operationally** in the preparation and implementation of load-reducing measures. Network operators must notify the supply coordinator of the need for such measures at an early stage so that a balanced decision can be made in time. This is the only way to **take adequate account of the justified interests of all gas consumers**, both protected customers and others.

The Bundesnetzagentur is discussing with network operators the need for load-reducing measures and the specific impact of any such measures, which need to be analysed in advance as regards their hydraulic effects, that is to say, their effect on actual gas flows in the networks. Then the gas saved can be employed as usefully as possible.

A „gas crisis management“ dialogue between the federal and 16 state governments has been launched.

Update of experience gained from LÜKEX in 2018

The Bundesnetzagentur practised an acute gas deficit scenario in 2018 in the interstate crisis management exercise LÜKEX 18. It subsequently conducted a complete revision of the Emergency Plan for Gas for the Federal Republic of Germany together with the BMWK. As part of this, it also collected basic information from all major gas consumers in Germany about their connection and consumption situation. The Bundesnetzagentur is now prioritising updating this information. It is also comparing the data with those held by the network operators to whose networks the consumers are connected.

The information asked for is also being significantly expanded. The aim of this is to be able to better estimate and assess the consequences of a short-term suspension or rationing of gas for the affected companies and in the respective networks. The information is being transferred to an **IT-based gas security platform** in coordination with the network operators. This will be up-to-date at all times and bring together all the information needed to make individual decisions.

Preparations at the Bundesnetzagentur

The Bundesnetzagentur is prepared for its role as national supply coordinator, having undertaken a variety of organisational, content-related, staffing and practical measures. It has brought together and trained **65 experts for each of the gas and electricity crisis teams** for the emergency level. The supply coordination tasks can be carried out in shifts round the clock. The number of people involved also means that cover is ensured even if there are any absences caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Bundesnetzagentur has its own on-site crisis room that it has set up as a situation centre in which the crisis teams can access all necessary information and means of communication **24/7**. The situation centre has its own electricity generator and water supply, ensuring its continued use even in the event that the supply crisis were to take a dramatic turn.

Next steps: public communications

An important part of the preparations is the immediate initiation of measures to save gas now and help to fill gas storage facilities. Public awareness and understanding of the tense situation and voluntary reductions in gas consumption are an important contribution to preventing, or at least mitigating, potentially severe measures.