

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

Incorporated companies in the United Kingdom — July 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/incorporated-companies-in-the-united-kingdom-july-2015>

Name of Producer Organisation

Companies House

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

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24/08/15

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2: Release practices, Practice 7:

Subject to compliance with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation, limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Publish records of those who have access prior to release.

Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008, Paragraph 4:

Subject to paragraph 5, the person responsible may not grant pre-release access for a period in excess of 24 hours prior to the time set for the publication of an official statistic.

Date of occurrence

17 August 2015

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

An email to pre-release recipients containing the release in its final form was accidentally sent on Monday 17 August 2015 at approximately 08:45 instead of Wednesday 26 August 2015.

The email was recalled within a minute of sending.

Reasons for breach

The email was prepared in advance of the pre-release access date with the intention of using the delayed delivery feature. The sender forgot to amend the delivery date so the email was sent immediately.

3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)

The sender realised the error immediately after the email was sent as they were included in the copy list. Immediate action was taken by the sender to recall the email.

To the best of our knowledge no internal recipient of the email had a chance to examine the contents before the email was recalled and therefore there was no impact resulting from the breach internally.

The email was also sent to the Head and Deputy Head of Profession of Statistics at BIS. They are external to Companies House and the recall function does not work for emails transferred to other email systems.

A peer experienced in releasing Official Statistics was asked to review the current process and make recommendations to strengthen processes. Their recommendations form part of the corrective actions below.

4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

Staff will change the way in which emails are prepared. The delayed delivery feature will not be used in future. A further measure to minimise accidental release will be implemented to ensure the email recipient fields are not populated in advance of the pre-release access time.

Staff working with official statistics will be given a training session to familiarise them with their responsibilities under the Code of Practice and Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008.

Specialist staff with a background in official statistics will be recruited to help ensure full compliance with the Code in future.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

A link to the breach report will be included on the release webpage when the release is published.

6. Any other relevant supporting material

This Breach occurred as Companies House transition to full-compliance with the Code of Practice. Dedicated resource is being recruited to deal with the publication of Official Statistics.