Press release

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BKW to decommission ripple control system at the end of 2029

Affected customers will be notified individually

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BKW will cease operating its ripple control system at the end of 2029. The technology used to switch boilers, electric heaters and street lighting on and off at specific times has, after 50 years, reached the end of its technical service life. At the same time, the electricity system is evolving towards decentralised and flexible solutions. The ripple control system no longer meets these requirements.



A ripple control receiver common in the BKW supply area (© BKW)

For around 50 years, the ripple control system has reliably helped to shift part of the electricity consumption to periods of lower demand and reduced grid load within BKW's supply area – for example, by switching on electric water boilers and electric heating systems at night. Municipalities and cantons also use the ripple control signal, for example for public lighting. BKW also leases the signal to downstream distribution system operators. More than 100,000 customers currently use the ripple control signal.

The ripple control system is now reaching the end of its technical service life. Spare parts are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain, and maintenance and operation are very resource-intensive. Continued operation beyond 2029 would require a comprehensive overhaul and upgrade, involving considerable investment.

The electricity system is becoming more decentralised and flexible

BKW has decided against this complete upgrade, as a ripple control system no longer suits the electricity system of the future. More and more customers are generating their own electricity using photovoltaic systems, storing energy in batteries or shifting their electricity consumption to different times of day with the help of energy management systems. This increases the possibilities for individually and flexibly coordinating power generation and consumption. BKW already offers solutions in this regard, such as the new “Sonne scheint” grid usage tariff and dynamic feed-in remuneration.

Three years to prepare for the transition

Customers whose systems are still controlled by the ripple control system do not need to take any immediate action. There is enough time until the system is shut down at the end of 2029 to disconnect customers’ systems from the ripple control system and make the necessary adjustments. To disconnect systems from the ripple control receiver, an electrician must be consulted. They will ensure that the adjustments are carried out professionally and safely. They will also arrange for the disconnection to be duly reported to BKW as the grid operator.

Over the coming days and weeks, BKW will personally inform the affected customer groups about what the switch will mean for their system and how they should proceed. Municipalities, cantons and downstream distribution system operators that use the ripple control signal will also be informed in good time about the necessary steps, with the same applying to electrical installers.

The information is available on the website www.bkw.ch/rundsteuerung.

BKW

The BKW Group is a Bern-based international energy and infrastructure company, employing over 12,500 people. Its company network and innovative technologies enable it to offer customers a full range of skills in the areas of infrastructure, buildings and energy. The Group plans, builds and operates infrastructure to produce and supply energy to businesses, households and the public sector, and offers digital business models for renewable energies. Today, the BKW Group portfolio includes everything from engineering consultancy and planning for energy, infrastructure and environmental projects to integrated services in the field of building technology, as well as the construction, servicing and maintenance of energy, telecommunications, transport and water utility networks.