

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

1. Core Information [\[guidance\]](#)

Title and link to statistical output	Final UK greenhouse gas emissions national statistics: 1990 to 2018 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-1990-to-2018
Name of producer organisation	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	David Fry, BEIS Head of Profession for Statistics, 020 7215 3276, David.Fry@beis.gov.uk
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of breach report	18/02/2020

2. Circumstances of breach [\[guidance\]](#)

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – T3.3: “Access to statistics before their public release should be limited to those involved in the production of the statistics and the preparation of the release, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Accurate records of those who have access before they are finalised should be maintained.” – T3.4 “The circulation of statistics in their final form ahead of their publication should be restricted to eligible recipients, in line with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation for the UK and devolved administrations. The details of those granted access should be recorded, together with clear justifications for access. No indication of the statistics should be made public and the statistics should not be given to any other party without prior permission for access. The list of recipients should be reviewed regularly and kept to a minimum.” – V2: Accessibility: "Statistics and data should be equally available to all, not given to some people before others. They should be published at a sufficient level of detail and remain publicly available."
Date of occurrence of breach	03/02/2020
<p>At 9.45pm the evening before publication a policy official at the Department for Transport (DfT) who receives pre-release access to the statistics forwarded an email containing some headline results to five of their colleagues who were not entitled to pre-release access.</p> <p>The email that was forwarded contained appropriate protective markings and handling instructions that highlighted the list of officials at DfT entitled to pre-release access and the time and date that they applied until. The team that produce the statistics at BEIS had shared the statistics with the official at DfT leading on their internal briefing in an email that contained similar markings and instructions.</p>	

Further discussions revealed that the official concerned had believed that it would be acceptable to share only the headline results with a limited number of people with policy responsibility for the topic concerned.

3. Impact of the breach [\[guidance\]](#)

The impact of the breach was limited. Five officials at DfT received access to a small number of headline results from the statistics about 12 hours before they were published. None of the publication documents were shared. The results included the overall trend in greenhouse gas emissions and several relating to transport emissions. They were not shared any further.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence[\[guidance\]](#)

On discovering the breach the following morning, the statistician at DfT who coordinates the pre-release briefing within the department emailed the officials involved at 8.57am to tell them not to share the statistics further before publication and to direct them towards the handling instructions on the original email that had been forwarded.

BEIS officials have liaised with officials at DfT to ensure appropriate corrective actions will take place. The statistical team at DfT is already actively working towards developing closer working relationships with the policy division. Given that the breach has occurred, they will ensure that raising awareness of official statistics will form part of this work. This will include raising it with the Senior Civil Servant in the relevant team who is ultimately responsible for ensuring an appropriate working culture amongst those who receive pre-release access to any official statistics. From there they will consider the best approach for communicating awareness with the rest of the team. Most policy leads already have a very clear understanding of the Code of Practice requirements on pre-release through frequent engagements with DfT statisticians, but rare events like this show that more needs to be done.

As there was a misunderstanding around what could be shared prior to release, statisticians will ensure that those on the pre-release access list are appropriately trained in advance of future publications. DfT statisticians have explained to policy officials that the pre-release access rules apply to the full contents of the release, including any headline messages. Prior to the next BEIS release, DfT statisticians will arrange a pre-meet with the policy official to remind them of the rules and check understanding.