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HMRC internal manual

Complaints and Remedy Guidance

From: **HM Revenue & Customs**
(/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs)

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CRG3250 - Mistakes: system failure

It is good practice to consult Online Services for advice when system failure (in connection with our online services) is alleged or suspected, as they are best placed to understand the background and technical aspects of issues arising.

A system failure is an error or difficulty that occurs because of a problem with an IT system belonging to or within the control of HMRC. Examples of system failures could include:

- Unplanned downtime preventing the customer accessing an online facility
- Inability to view an account online

- A customer receiving information relating to another customer (though be aware that this could be the result of human rather than system error)
- A customer receiving multiple copies of the same information
- Penalty notices issued despite a return being filed on time (though be aware that this could be the result of human rather than system error).

Dealing with complaints about system failures

A complaint about a system failure should be treated in the same way as any other complaint and therefore, if something has gone wrong, you should apologise and consider any claim for financial redress (see CRG5550). As with other complaints, it is not normally necessary to invite a claim for financial redress but you should do so where the customer appears confused or vulnerable, or where our error is such that a substantial claim will be inevitable.

Unplanned downtime

Sometimes customers try to use an online service and find that it is temporarily unavailable. This is frustrating and where a customer complains, an apology should always be given.

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Viruses

We would not usually uphold a complaint or consider financial redress if a customer claims they have been the victim of a computer virus which originated on our system, so long as we had taken all reasonable steps to protect our systems in accordance with our Terms & Conditions and Privacy Policy. If you do receive a complaint about this seek advice from CCAST.

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