Energy UK

Code of Practice for **Accurate Bills**

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Background guidance

The Code of Practice for Accurate Bills has been developed by Energy UK with British Gas (including Scottish Gas), EDF Energy, E.ON, RWE npower and ScottishPower; these companies all support the independently-audited Code of Practice and are committed to the Code as a minimum standard of service for customers.

What you can expect from your supplier

The Code confirms the suppliers' commitment to bill customers regularly and accurately, and imposes limitations on the circumstances where customers can be billed for previously unbilled energy that is more than 12 months old. This is called the Back Billing Rule. For more information on how the Back Billing Rule is applied, please refer to the Energy UK website for details.

Suppliers will provide information and advice on the products, services and payment methods they have available to make sure you are able to make an informed choice.

If you receive a bill/statement that you do not understand or you wish to query, you should contact your supplier for an explanation. The supplier may reissue a revised bill or explain why it is not necessary to do so.

Customer's responsibilities

Customers should pay for energy used. The Code and the Back Billing rules are not intended as a means for avoiding payments. Customers have an obligation to assist suppliers and can expect to pay for all energy consumed if they:

— Have been using the supply but have made no attempt to contact the supplier to make or arrange payment, including moving into a property and making no attempt to let a supplier know they are the new tenant.

— Have wilfully avoided payment.

— Have not co-operated with attempts to obtain meter readings or resolve queries requested by the supplier, including allowing access to the premise or failing to respond to requests for meter details or meter readings.

Customers should ensure that estimated meter readings on their bill are accurate and if not update the supplier with accurate readings.

In the event of billing problems, customers should be encouraged to pay a reasonable estimate of their consumption with the understanding that once an accurate bill is produced, suppliers will use payments or credits to offset any additional charges or allowances.

1. Joining, leaving or moving

Suppliers will work with customers to make sure accurate information is recorded and transfers between suppliers are smooth.

1.1 If you are moving home you need to notify your supplier(s) and provide them with your energy meter readings.

1.2 Suppliers will ensure that when you open a new account or close your account following a change of supplier, the old supplier and new supplier will agree the meter reading for the time of transfer.

1.3 You will be provided with the information you need during the switching process (such as notification of supply start date) and will be able to contact your old or new supplier if you have any enquiries

2. Meter readings

Suppliers will offer a range of options to make sure that they obtain and record the most up to date and accurate meter reading.

2.1 Your supplier will attempt to obtain a meter reading on a regular basis, at least every two years as a minimum, either by visiting your premises or explaining how you can provide your own reading.

2.2 Where a valid read has been obtained this will be used to improve the accuracy of your bill /statement.

2.3 It is important to check the accuracy of meter readings used on your bill, including estimated ones. Suppliers will provide information to help you understand the importance of the meter reading process.

3. Receiving your energy bill

Suppliers will use all available information to produce accurate, clear and timely bills.

3.1 Your supplier has processes and controls to ensure that the charges on your bill accurately reflect your current tariff and that when there is a change to these tariffs, the consumption and charges are apportioned appropriately.

3.2 Your energy bill and/or statement will, list the energy you have used and the suppliers charges, in a simple format so that you could calculate your own bill. It will be clear if the supplier is billing you for gas, electricity or other products and services.

3.3 If your supplier does not have an actual or customer reading they will send a bill based on the amount of energy you have historically used, or based on average amount of energy used or are forecasted to use.

3.4 Your supplier shall make it clear on the bill whether an actual, customer, estimated or consecutive estimated readings have been used to calculate the amount owed.

3.5 Your energy bill and/or statement will be sent out in line your agreed payment plan. You will be informed of any major change to the future planned billing dates.

3.6 Where your supplier increases their prices or reduces their discounts, this will be clearly communicated to you, using your bill, statement or other form of written communication.

3.7 Your supplier has processes in place to ensure that unusually high or low bills are checked before they are sent out.

3.8 If you provide a valid read it will be used to produce a revised bill/statement, if appropriate. This will be sent out within 10 working days.

4. Paying your bill

Suppliers will offer a range of payment options which they will clearly communicate to the customer.

4.1 If you are a direct debit customer your supplier will take all reasonable steps to ensure your payments are set at the right level. This includes reviewing your account proactively to make sure your payments are sufficient to cover your energy usage.

4.2 In the event of money being owed to a customer, your supplier will refund that amount in accordance with the customer's particular product/payment plan.

4.3 Your supplier will offer a range of payment plans to assist with the payment of an outstanding bill.

4.4 If you use a prepayment meter, your supplier will issue new prices to update your meter automatically when you make a payment.

5. Back Billing

Suppliers have signed on to the Back Billing Principles. Each and every back billing case will be assessed on an individual basis by your supplier.

5.1 If your supplier is at fault, they will not seek additional payment for unbilled energy accrued more than one year prior to the bill being issued.

6. Support for vulnerable customers

Suppliers take great care to avoid disconnecting vulnerable customers as a result of debt.

6.1 Energy Suppliers have agreed to protect vulnerable consumers under the arrangements described in the Energy UK Safety Net. Please refer to the Energy UK website for more details on the Safety Net.

7. Advice, enquiries, complaints and disputes

Suppliers will provide advice and information to customers to help them better understand their energy bills. Suppliers will advise customers of their complaints procedure and the dispute resolution service.

7.1 Suppliers will provide information and advice on the products, services and payment methods they have available to make sure you are able to make an informed choice.

7.2 If you receive a bill / statement that you do not understand or you wish to query, you should contact your supplier, who will, provide an explanation or if necessary or appropriate, reissue the bill.

7.3 Suppliers will aim to resolve any issues the customer raises to their satisfaction, reviewing the individual circumstances of each complaint.

Terms and definitions

Bill
Documentation issued by the Supplier to a customer notifying charges due to be paid and payments received against this account.

Back Billing
From 1st July 2007, where a supplier is at fault in not billing a domestic customer, they will not send a bill which includes unbilled energy consumed more than 1 year previous to the bill being issued

Domestic customer
A customer who uses a supply of gas or electricity is consumed wholly or mainly for a domestic purpose. .

Priority Service Register (PSR)
Is a register of customers who are of pensionable age, have sight or hearing difficulties, disabled or chronically ill.

Statement
A document issued to a customer that details their energy usage, payments made and other pertinent information.

Supplier
The party undertaking to supply a service or services for which periodic billing is made and includes any agent acting on behalf of the Supplier

Valid reading
A reading that is acceptable to the both the customer and the Supplier.

Vulnerable customer
A customer who for reasons of age, health, disability or severe financial insecurity is unable to safeguard their personal welfare or the personal welfare of other members of the household

Working Days
Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays

To find out more please
contact the Code Manager

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