



Northern Ireland Residential Electricity Customers

Code of Practice on Payment of Bills

July 2019

electricireland.com

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Billing information

Electric Ireland issues bills on a quarterly basis to residential customers. Your bill is calculated on the basis of meter reading(s), estimates and other data supplied by NIE Transmission & Distribution (NIE T&D). Customer readings may be used where provided.

Electric Ireland will provide support to industry initiatives to improve the quality of meter reading by advising customers (through messages on the bill or information leaflets) of the importance of providing NIE T&D with access to meters.

Your bill will contain detailed information (including tariffs, standing charges if applicable, other service charges, levies VAT and discounts) on the amount of energy to be charged to your account and any debit or credit balances from previous bills. Your bill will also show the period(s) you are being billed for, as well as the date of issue and the date when payment is due.

Electric Ireland will issue scheduled bills to customers no later than one month after the receipt of meter reading data for the billing period involved, except in situations where the customer has agreed otherwise, or where meter reading data appears erroneous. Electric Ireland will notify customers 21 days in advance of any increase in charges.

The changes will be clearly indicated on the bill and the method of application will be explained either on the bill, in an accompanying insert, or in a letter.

Where calculation of bills occurs at a tariff change (e.g. if a new tariff applies to only one or two months of your quarterly bill), this will be indicated on the bill and the methodology will be explained either on the bill, in an accompanying insert, or in a letter. We will provide additional information on our bills such as details of:

- ▶ Emergency contact number for NIE T&D
- ▶ Contact numbers for Electric Ireland
- ▶ Meter Point Data provided by NIE T&D
- ▶ Our complaints handling procedure
- ▶ Contact details for the Utility Regulator and the Consumer Council

Electric Ireland may provide bills to customers in an electronic format where available, and in agreement with the customer. All provisions of this Code of Practice will apply to this bill format also.

As Pay As You Go Keypad Meter customers will not receive a bill, these customers will receive a yearly statement of account from Electric Ireland to inform them of their annual electricity usage.

All billing complaints will be resolved through Electric Ireland's Code of Practice on Complaints Handling which has separately been approved by the Utility Regulator and the Consumer Council.

This Code of Practice outlines the billing information, payment options and debt collection policies of Electric Ireland. This Code applies to our Northern Ireland residential electricity customers only.

Payment options

Electric Ireland makes paying your energy bill as easy as possible by offering customers a wide range of convenient payment channels. Our standard payment terms are 14 days from the date of issue on your bill, or immediately if your bill issues with arrears. The following is a list of our current payment options:

- ▶ Payment by Direct Debit
- ▶ Payment over the counter e.g. at any PayPoint outlet with an EasyPay card
- ▶ Postal payment by cheque
- ▶ Payment by bank giro (where available)
- ▶ Payment by Debit Card and Switch Card over the phone. LoCall 0345 600 5335 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 7pm)
- ▶ Online banking or other electronic payment (where available)
- ▶ Payment by individual Pay As You Go Electricity Cards which are used to purchase “top-ups” for Pay As You Go Keypad Meter customers (see separate Code of Practice on Services for Pay As You Go Keypad Meter Customers)

You must pay your bill in accordance with the terms of your chosen Price Plan. If you pay us by Direct Debit, we reserve the right to change our Direct

Debit collection date and we will notify you in advance of doing this. Customers who choose not to pay by Direct Debit or by Pay As You Go Keypad Meter, are required to pay a security deposit of £135. Electric Ireland will refund this security deposit to your electricity account after twelve months, provided all bills have been paid on time and in full during the previous twelve months. Should you close your account with Electric Ireland your security deposit will be refunded in full within 1 month subject to any outstanding bill being paid in full.

Payment difficulties and arrangements

All Electric Ireland staff who have contact with consumers, including sales, billing, credit control, customer service and field staff are sensitive to the specific circumstances of all of our customers and we understand there are times when financial hardship might affect customer’s ability to pay. We encourage all customers having difficulties paying, especially in the event of a change in circumstances e.g. redundancy or incapacitating illness or injury to contact us without delay. We are committed to helping customers who are experiencing difficulties in paying their bills and will work with customers or their representatives including consumer and advice agencies to ensure that customers experiencing difficulty paying their bills receive the appropriate help by:

- ▶ Offering an arrangement based on your circumstances and ability to pay an agreed amount by instalments, or should the arrangement be broken install a Keypad Meter. An agreed percentage (which will not exceed a 40% maximum debt repayment rate) of each top up will go towards clearing the arrears.
- ▶ If you are repaying a debt you should contact us again if you experience any difficulties with your repayment plan.
- ▶ Installing a Pay As You Go Keypad Meter where it is agreed to be the best option available. Electric Ireland will take all reasonable steps to avoid disconnection of supply. Where a domestic consumer takes their electricity or gas through a non-domestic supply for example a flat above commercial premises, make best endeavours, where aware, that domestic customers are not disconnected inappropriately if the commercial premises no longer receives supply. In the event of a disconnection in error, for example where a customer has been disconnected during **Oct** to **March** but identified as being vulnerable after disconnection, suppliers must make reasonable endeavours to reconnect the customer within 24 hours (on working days). Where such a disconnection is made in error the supplier must not apply disconnection or reconnection charges to the customer.
- ▶ Providing information on the efficient use of electricity to help reduce future bills. (See separate Code of Practice on the Efficient use of Electricity). Where a customer enters into an agreed payment arrangement with us, we will monitor compliance with the agreed payment arrangement and maintain contact with the customer throughout. If a Pay As You Go Keypad Meter is installed, calibration of the meter to recover outstanding debts will take into account the customer's ability to pay. Information is also available from Advice NI with whom we will cooperate as appropriate. You can contact the Consumer Council for general advice or for dispute resolution (including debt or repayment arrangements) at any time – see details below.

The Consumer Council
 Floor 3, Seatem House, 28-32
 Alfred Street, BELFAST, BT2 8EN

Tel: 028 9025 1600 Fax: 028 9025 1663
 Email: contact@consumercouncil.org.uk
 Web: www.consumercouncil.org.uk

Advice NI
 1 Rushfield Avenue, Belfast, BT7 3FP
 Tel: 028 9064 5919
 Email: info@adviceni.net
 Web: www.adviceni.net

If we fail to meet any of the commitments outlined in this Code then you will be entitled to compensation under the terms of our Customer Charter.

Copies of our Customer Charter and other Codes can be obtained in the following ways:

By phone: LoCall 0345 600 5335

(Monday to Friday,
 8.30am to 7pm)

By post: Electric Ireland

1st Floor, 1 Cromac Quay,
 The Gasworks, Belfast BT7 2JD,
 Northern Ireland

By email: customerservice@electricireland.com

Online: www.electricireland.com

Electric Ireland is committed to using language in correspondence that is non-threatening and supportive and also that all customer contact will be conducted in a friendly and non-aggressive way.

This Code has been approved by the Utility Regulator in consultation with the Consumer Council.

