



Code of Practice for Customer Billing and Disconnection

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Smarter Living

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Ireland

This Code of Practice outlines the billing information, payment options and debt collection policies of Electric Ireland. This Code applies to all our customers, both residential and business.

Billing information

Electric Ireland issues bills on a two-monthly basis to residential and small business customers. Larger business customers may receive monthly bills where appropriate.

Your bill is calculated on the basis of meter reading(s), actual or estimated, and other data supplied by the **relevant Network Operator***. 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 the **relevant Network Operator** with access to meters.

Your bill will contain detailed information (including tariffs, standing charges, other service charges, VAT and levies) on the amount of energy to be charged to your account and any debit or credit balances from previous bills and, where relevant, any allowances to which you may be entitled, such as Free Electricity Allowance. Your bill will also show the period(s) you are being billed for, as well as the date of issue and the date that 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 incorrect.

Electric Ireland will indicate if your bill has been based on (a) an actual reading, (e) an estimate (by supplier or MRSO/GPRO), or (c) a reading submitted by a customer.

Electric Ireland will notify customers directly of any increase in charges at an appropriate time, no later than one billing period after the increase comes into effect. The changes will be clearly indicated on the bill and the method of application will be explained on the bill, in an accompanying insert or in a letter. Where bills are proportionally calculated at a tariff change, this will be indicated on the bill and the way in which it was done will be explained on the bill, in an accompanying insert or in a letter.

We will provide additional information on our bills such as details of:

- ▶ Contact numbers for Electric Ireland, and the **relevant Network Operators**
- ▶ Meter Point Data provided by the **relevant Network Operators**
- ▶ Our complaints handling procedure
- ▶ Contact details for the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)

Electric Ireland may provide bills to customers in electronic format, with the consent of the customer.

Customer may revert back to paper billing at any time unless specified at sign-up in the supplier's terms and conditions of the supply contract.

***For electricity customers this is ESB Networks, for gas customers this is Gas Networks Ireland.**

Security

If we decide it is required at any time, you may need to provide reasonable security, which may be in the form of a deposit. Electric Ireland charge a standard €300.00 deposit for all domestic customers. This figure of €300.00 is based on an average two-monthly bill. Deposit amounts for commercial customers will vary depending on the type of business. Any security cover provided to us which is in the form of a cash deposit will be repaid to you when you close your account provided all sums due have been paid, or after a certain period (not more than twelve months) provided you have satisfied our payment terms on a continuous basis, whichever is the earliest. You may have to give us your date of birth and/or other personal information for credit assessment purposes.

Closing your account

You may be closing your home or business account for the following reasons:

- ▶ Moving out of home or business premises
- ▶ Change of occupancy
- ▶ Disconnecting your premises if it is unoccupied for a long period of time or is due to be demolished

In the above instances, it is important that you contact us and provide us with the following information:

- ▶ Your name and account number
- ▶ The date you will be moving out
- ▶ The final meter reading
- ▶ Your forwarding address

To agree a transfer meter reading with the new owner, occupant or landlord, we will need the new occupant's name and phone number (or the landlord, solicitor or estate agent's name and number), if available.

In the event that you cannot provide a reading or access to de-energise the premises, we

will estimate the closing reading and any charges arising from this estimate must be accepted by you as the due amount on your final bill.

Electric Ireland will issue a final closing bill not later than six weeks from the effective date of the change of supplier or account close taking place.

A fee will apply to any disconnection or reconnection carried out at the customer's request. We will use this information to issue your final bill.

Should your final account issue with a credit balance we can refund this balance to you if you contact us at 1850 372 372.

We can refund this balance by either EFT direct to your bank account or by cheque.

You will be informed by letter of any credit balance, on your account within two months of the final bill issuing.

What to do

Visit us online at www.electricireland.ie/MIMO to complete your moving process with us or call us on 1850 372 372 when you're about to move.

Disconnection procedure

Electric Ireland wants all customers to have continued access to energy. We work to ensure that withdrawal of supply happens only as a last resort, and have committed as part of The Energy Engage Code to never disconnect an engaging customer.

We make every effort to:

- ▶ Contact customers by letter or phone regarding their overdue accounts. This will include at least two attempts to contact the customer by notice in writing; at least two additional attempts to contact the customer, where available - this could be by telephone, email or text message - in advance of issuing any formal request to disconnect a customer. Each attempt to contact the customer will take place no less than three working days apart

- ▶ Train our staff to deal with sensitive and difficult circumstances
- ▶ Determine a customer's ability to pay
- ▶ Agree an appropriate payment arrangement which suits the customer's circumstances, while avoiding a situation where the debt becomes worse. Where a payment plan has been entered into to avoid disconnection, details of the payment plan setting out a clear explanation will be sent to the customer in writing no later than one week after the plan has been agreed. Where appropriate, and with the express agreement of the customer, this may include arranging to have a pre-payment meter or budget controller installed
- ▶ Carefully consider all customer offers of repayment
- ▶ Refer the customer for guidance to their local MABS office or local Community Welfare Officer, where circumstances call for it. Business customers can also nominate a financial advisor to assist if required or to a third party nominated by the customer
- ▶ Find out about any exceptional circumstances, such as special needs, which may require registration as required in the Code of Practice for Special Services

Disconnection of a customer's supply will not be initiated

- a. Where a customer has entered into a payment plan with the supplier and is honouring that arrangement;
- b. Where a customer is pursuing a complaint using the complaint handling procedures specified by the supplier and the complaint is related to the reason for disconnection;

- c. In the event that a customer is disputing a bill. This clause only applies to the disputed bill and not any previous or subsequent bills which must be paid as normal;
- d. For failure to pay a bill which is not related to the supply of electricity/gas;
- e. For failure to pay a bill based on a regular estimate unless it is fair and reasonable in the circumstances (e.g. access to read a meter is refused).
By way of example, it is considered reasonable to request a customer's disconnection where long term no access to a premises is an issue and the customer has been informed. However where, as part of the metering cycle, a customer receives an estimated read and this appears not to match the customer's normal consumption pattern, the customer may dispute this and should not be disconnected.
- f. Where a customer relies on a recognised life support system and is appropriately registered with their supplier;
- g. During the winter months, where a person has appropriately registered as a Vulnerable Customer with their supplier;
- h. Where a customer is a member of any category of customer that the CRU may specify from time to time.

Note: FOR BUSINESS CUSTOMERS

Electric Ireland's intention to disconnect supply is subject to providing the customer with five working days' notice in writing of our intention to request disconnection from the relevant Network Operator. However, for any business customer where, in our opinion, there is a high risk of impending default, the disconnection notice period may be reduced to two days.

After exhausting all other options, Electric Ireland may request the relevant Network Operator to withdraw supply from a customer, subject to 10 working days' notice in writing, and in accordance with the ESB Networks De-energisation Code of Practice or the Gas Networks Ireland Disconnection Code of Practice as suitable, where:

- ▶ The customer has not engaged with us to genuinely resolve the arrears on their account
- ▶ The customer's account has not been paid in agreement with the terms of their contract
- ▶ The customer does not agree to a payment arrangement or breaks an agreed arrangement
- ▶ The customer refuses the installation of a pre-pay meter or budget controller
- ▶ The customer does not engage / respond to any of our correspondence / communications
- ▶ The customer requests us to do so. In this instance, the person making the disconnection request must be the registered account holder or have the express permission of the account holder to disconnect the supply. In this instance also, arrears will still be recouped and standing charges may still apply
- ▶ There is no registered occupant at the premises. If the existing registered account holder has closed their account and Electric Ireland is still supplying the premises, we will issue a separate notice to the premises, in writing by letter, and at least 10 working days for gas accounts in advance of a formal request to disconnect the premises, due to no account holder being registered

- ▶ Note: In the event of an emergency, or where a safety issue arises, or where interference is suspected, or for operational reasons where appropriate - the relevant Network Operator may disconnect a customer without notice
- ▶ Gas Networks Ireland believe there is no active gas supplier at the premises

The notice to customers which warns of the impending disconnection will be sent in writing and will specify:

- ▶ That 10 working days' notice, including the reason for disconnection, is being given with our intention to request the relevant Network Operator to disconnect for non-payment
- ▶ The costs associated with the disconnection and reconnection of the supply
- ▶ That arrears may not be paid to the person(s) carrying out the disconnection
- ▶ Contact details for Electric Ireland Credit Control staff to discuss settlement terms
- ▶ Contact details for a nominated support agency to be agreed with CRU as appropriate e.g. MABS
- ▶ Note: No disconnection calls will be made on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, eve of a Public Holiday or a Public Holiday

In accordance with the Code of Practice for Special Services, if it is discovered that a customer qualifies under the Code, then we will advise the customer to make an application to register. In addition, we will seek to make a payment arrangement with the customer as an alternative to disconnection.

Customers will not have their supply withdrawn where:

- ▶ The customer offers to settle any outstanding bill (including arrears) within an agreed timescale and keeps that commitment
- ▶ The customer agrees and keeps to a payment arrangement to clear their account by instalments over a reasonable period of time
- ▶ The customer or a member of the household is dependent on recognised emergency medical equipment powered by electricity and has registered with us as an approved customer
- ▶ The customer has registered elderly status (for the period from 1st November to 31st March)
- ▶ The customer is pursuing a complaint using Electric Ireland's complaint handling procedures and the complaint is related to the reason for disconnection
- ▶ The bill is based on an irregular estimate which does not line up with previous readings or usage history, unless we obtain a reading for the meter in question
- ▶ The outstanding amount is not related to the supply of electricity or gas
- ▶ Customer has agreed to the installation of a PAYG meter

Reconnection of supply

Where the supply has been disconnected and the customer (or their representative) reaches a settlement with Electric Ireland, the supply will be reconnected as soon as possible in agreement with our standard terms and conditions and in agreement with the Network Operators Reconnection Schedule.

As part of the reconnection process, we will review account status with each customer, taking account of individual circumstances to establish necessary steps to improving the customer's creditworthiness. We may require provision of a security deposit or other such measure until the customer has met the normal credit terms for a period of 12 months continuously. We will set these conditions out in writing for the customer, including how any associated deposit will be repaid.

All complaints will be resolved through Electric Ireland's Complaints Handling Procedure.

The Complaints Handling Procedure is a separate Code of Practice which has been approved by CRU.

If we fail to meet any of the commitments outlined in this Code then the customer may 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: 1850 372 372
(8am – 8pm Monday to Saturday)

By post: Electric Ireland
PO Box 841,
South City Delivery Office,
Togher,
Cork

By email: service@electricireland.ie

Online: www.electricireland.ie/customercharter



Payment options

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

- ▶ Payment by Direct Debit
- ▶ Payment by Laser or Visa Debit Card via our website or by phoning 1850 372 372
- ▶ Payment by Household Budget
- ▶ Payment over the counter e.g. at any PayPoint, Payzone, AIB, Postpoint or An Post outlet
- ▶ Postal payment by cheque
- ▶ Payment by bank giro (where available)
- ▶ ATM or electronic payment (where available)

You must pay your bill to the specific payment conditions 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.

Payment difficulties and arrangements

Electric Ireland is sensitive to the specific circumstances of all of our customers and we understand there are times when financial hardship might affect customers' ability to pay. We are committed to helping customers who are experiencing genuine difficulties in paying their bills and will work with customers and welfare agencies as required, by:

- ▶ Advising customers to contact us at an early stage if they are experiencing difficulty making payment on their bill
- ▶ Offering an arrangement to pay an agreed amount by instalments or the installation of a PAYG meter
- ▶ Working with such agencies nominated by the customer to resolve their financial difficulty e.g. MABS

This Code has been approved by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU).
CRU's Energy Customer Care Team can be contacted by phone at 1890 404 404
or by visiting www.cru.ie/customer-care