



Code of Practice on Vulnerable Customers

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Code of Practice on Vulnerable Customers

Electric Ireland's objective is to provide the best service possible to all of our customers. In particular, we are concerned about those customers who require special services, for example, those with special requirements and the elderly.

Vulnerable Customer Definition

Special services apply to households with a customer who is:

- ▶ critically dependent on electrically powered equipment, which shall include but is not limited to life-protecting devices, assistive technologies to support independent living and medical equipment,

or

- ▶ particularly vulnerable to disconnection during winter months for reasons of advanced age or physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health.

In this Code of Practice, we have set down our commitments to providing those special services.

- ▶ We will provide a registration service for those customers who require special services covered by this Code.

- ▶ We will facilitate the registration of a third party representative where necessary.
- ▶ We will publicise special services through the media, on our website www.electricireland.ie and through our National Customer Contact Centre.
- ▶ We will make sure that our staff is trained to implement this Code of Practice.
- ▶ We will make all reasonable efforts to make sure that registered elderly customers are not disconnected at the request of Electric Ireland during the winter months of November to March inclusive.
- ▶ We will work closely with organisations representing customers with special needs, to make sure that we are providing the appropriate services.
- ▶ We will issue an annual report to the Commission for Energy Regulation detailing the number of customers registered for special services, in addition to a description of the services provided.

Registration for priority support customers dependent on medical equipment

We offer a registration service for customers who are reliant on home medical equipment, both life supporting and non-life supporting. This equipment includes home dialysis, oxygen concentrators, nebulisers, stair lifts, bath hoists etc.

Details of customers who register will be forwarded to ESB Networks for inclusion in the Industry Register, or to the Gas Point Register Operator (GPRO), for inclusion in the Priority Customers' List on the Gas Point Register. This will enable ESB Networks and the GPRO to identify those customers who are particularly vulnerable to an energy supply interruption.



Maintenance of register

Electric Ireland is committed to the maintenance and regular updating of the Priority Service Register of customers that are critically dependent on electrically-powered equipment, and the special services register of customers that are vulnerable to natural gas or electricity de-energisation during the winter months.

Life Support Equipment

Oxygen Concentrator
Personal Suction Machine
Home Dialysis
Peg Tube Feeding Pump
Total Parental Nutrition Machine
Ventilator

Non-Life Support Equipment

Electric Hoist
Electric Pressure Relieving Mattress
Household Lift
Nebuliser

Registration for hearing, speech, mobility or visually impaired customers

We offer a registration service for customers who have a visual impairment, have hearing/speech difficulties, or mobility difficulties. To avail of a range of special services that we offer, customers must register their details with us. Details of customers who register will be forwarded to ESB Networks for inclusion in the Industry Register, or to the Gas Point Register Operator (GPRO), for inclusion in the Priority Customers' List on the Gas Point Register. Special services include:

Braille bills – we can provide braille bills to people who are braille readers.

Talking bills – we can provide talking bills to people who are blind or have a visual impairment. When a bill is due for issue, we will telephone the customer, or a nominated contact person, with the details. The paper bill is then posted to them.

Large print bill – for people with visual impairment.

Redirecting bills – for people with visual impairment, we can send the bill to a nominated friend or relative if requested to do so.

Minicom facility – we offer a text phone service for people who have minicom equipment in their homes.

SMS – we provide an SMS text service which is particularly useful for customers with hearing difficulties.

Vulnerable customers will be placed on the most economic tariff available for their chosen payment method and billing format.

Special communications for visually impaired customers

In addition to braille and talking bills for customers who are visually impaired, we are committed to providing ongoing improvements to audio communication services.

Customers with mobility problems

If a customer has a mobility difficulty, he/she should contact us on 1850 372 372 to discuss their needs and we will advise on the most suitable options available.

Registration for elderly customers

In the case of elderly customers (defined as those who are the age of 66 years or above) who are registered with us, Electric Ireland will not request that their energy supply be disconnected for any reason (other than by customer request or for safety reasons) between the winter months of November to March inclusive.

Please note that customers who are in receipt of the Department of Social Protection free electricity allowance, through their Electric Ireland energy bill, are automatically registered and do not need to contact us. Customers who do not receive the Department of Social Protection free electricity, or free gas, allowance through their Electric Ireland energy bill must contact us to register.

Registration of third party representative

Where a customer has registered for special services but would like to register a third party representative to act on their behalf, Electric Ireland will facilitate this.

Registration can be arranged by ringing our Customer Contact Centre on **1850 372 372 (Monday to Saturday, 8am–8pm)**.

Payment difficulties

Customers who are finding it hard to pay their Electric Ireland energy bills should arrange to contact us immediately. We promise to deal with all customers in a sensitive and professional manner.

Unless requested by the customer, we will not request disconnection where customers have registered as depending on emergency medical equipment.

In addition, we will not request disconnection of special services customers, which include those defined as elderly during the months of November to March inclusive, unless the customer requests us to do so.

Further details of our policies may be found in our Code of Practice on Customer Billing and Payments.

Electric Ireland has adequate and efficient processes to ascertain the suitability of PAYG meters for vulnerable customers.

PAYG meters may not be suitable for some customers with medical or other special needs e.g. sight problems, hearing difficulties, medical equipment installed at home.

Should the installation not be possible, Electric Ireland are committed to making alternative payment arrangements. PAYG customers who terminate a contract of supply where the PAYG meter is no longer suitable for use due to their vulnerability will not incur any penalty.

Electric Ireland will bring the Code of Practice to the attention of customers via written or electronic communication at least once a year and on sign up.

Note: to register as a customer with special needs, customers must complete and sign an application form and return it to us. To order an application form, or to discuss your needs in relation to doing business with Electric Ireland, you can contact us by any of the methods at the bottom of the page. In the event that a customer verbally advises Electric Ireland that they wish to register a vulnerability, we will monitor completion of the request and follow up with the customer where required.

Communications

Electric Ireland will issue the below communications in the appropriate format to customers with visual and hearing impairments.

- ▶ Household Customer Terms and Conditions
- ▶ Customer Charter
- ▶ Customer Codes of Practice
- ▶ Household Tariff Information
- ▶ The energy bill and the energy statement
- ▶ Personalised Household Customer Communications (as approved by the CRU)
- ▶ Outage Notification
- ▶ Any letter to a customer informing them of a change in services or tariff
- ▶ Any insert to customers that has been required by the CRU

Confidentiality

The details of customers who register with us for priority service or special service needs will be passed to ESB Networks and to the Gas Point Register Operator, to allow them to provide you with additional services to suit your customer category, in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act (1988 and 2003).

If we fail to meet any of the commitments outlined in this Code, then customers 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:

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

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