



Electricity

Pay As You Go
meters

CODE OF PRACTICE

BGE/RE/PAYGCOP/0918



bordgaisenergy.ie

If you need any further help
or advice please contact us:

Residential electricity contact details

Tel: 611 01 08

Fax: 611 01 02

elecinfo@bordgais.ie

Minicom: 1850 630 630

(for hearing impaired customers
with their own minicom equipment)

Customer service

Residential electricity

Bord Gáis Energy

PO Box 10943, Dublin 2

Please note that calls may be recorded for quality
and training and to improve service and security
and verification purposes.

Code of Practice

Electricity

Pay As You Go Meters

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1 Introduction

This code of practice gives you information about Pay As You Go Meters and explains exactly what having a Pay As You Go Meter means for you. Please note that this Code also applies to budget controllers (where used). We hope you find it easy to follow, but if you need any further information please phone us on **611 01 08**. Our customer service representatives will listen and do their best to help. At all times they will be responsible, polite and understanding. They will provide impartial information on the advantages and disadvantages of Pay As You Go Meters.

Pay As You Go Meters may not be suitable for all customers (if for example you have special needs) or if your meter is fitted where you cannot get access to it or if you cannot easily get to a shop to purchase credit for the meter.

If a Pay as You Go Meter is not suitable for you, we will offer alternative payment options (such as a payment plan) where possible.

If you are finding it hard to pay your bills, we may want to fit a standard Pay As You Go Meter to help you pay back any money you owe.

Before a Pay As You Go Meter is installed we will always discuss your individual circumstances to make sure it is suitable for you.

2 What are Pay As You Go Meters?

Pay As You Go Meters are an excellent means of budgeting, as you pay for your electricity as you use it. This means that you don't have bills coming in every two months. When the meter is installed, you get an Electricity Card which you top up with credit at selected shops displaying the Payzone sign.

When you buy credit with your Electricity Card and credit your meter you pay for:

- Your electricity.
- A daily standing charge.
- A small PSO charge.

The payments are the same as if you were using a normal credit meter and receiving conventional or electronic bills. There are no extra charges for using a Pay As You Go Meter. You may also be paying off money you owe from previous bills by being on a special repayment tariff.

3 Advantages of a Pay As You Go Meter

A Pay As You Go Meter has several advantages:

- It lets you pay for electricity as you use it instead of receiving a bill every two months.
- It can help you budget for your energy and keep track of how much you're spending on electricity.
- The standard Pay As You Go tariff is the same as our standard tariff for credit meter customers.
- You will have an emergency credit facility (explained further in Section 15 of this Code) to use in genuine emergencies when you can't get to the shop to buy credit. But remember, when you use this you will have to pay it back AND top up with normal credit to get the supply back on.
- Our standard Pay As You Go Meter can allow you to stay on supply while repaying any money owed from past bills.

4 Disadvantages of a Pay As You Go Meter

The potential disadvantages of a Pay As You Go Meter include:

- You have to be able to visit a Payzone outlet to buy credit otherwise your electricity supply will stop.
- If you live in an apartment block, you may not have any access to your meter; in this case we would not recommend a Pay As You Go Meter.
- You pay the daily standing charge even on the days when you don't use electricity. Every electricity user pays a standing charge but on Pay As You Go, this will be deducted from your credit even if you are not using electricity e.g. over the Summer or if you are away from home for a period of time so you should make sure you have enough credit on your meter even when you are not using the electricity. Every electricity customer pays the same standing charge.
- If you do not top-up your meter with credit then your electricity supply will cut-off.

5 How much will you pay for your electricity?

The standard Pay As You Go tariff is for customers who use a Pay As You Go Meter to help budget for future electricity costs. This tariff consists of two elements. There is a daily standing charge and a single unit charge per kWh of electricity used. This tariff is the same as the standard tariff for credit meter customers.

The prevailing price for electricity supplied at the standard Pay As You Go tariff is set out in our tariff information leaflet. You can get a copy by calling **611 01 08** or view it online at **bordgaisenergy.ie**

6 Price of electricity

We will inform you by way of an advertisement in the national media and on our website when the price for electricity is due to change. We will also send you a tariff leaflet once a year or sooner if the price is changed. We will not have to arrange a visit to your meter when the price of electricity changes as this can be changed remotely.

7 Paying for electricity with a Pay As You Go Meter

The meter uses your money in the following ways;

- To pay for electricity as you use it.
- To pay a part of the standing charge every day.
- To pay for any money you may owe from previous bills.
- To pay for any emergency credit you have borrowed.
- The electricity PAYG meter can only be used to pay for electricity and not any other product / service.

The meter will display exactly how much credit you have left to use at any time. It will also let you know how many days electricity you have remaining based on current usage. You will then know when you should buy more credit for your meter. Every time you enter the Power Code in your meter after you have purchased credit, the display will increase by the amount you have purchased towards future electricity usage.

Check your meter display regularly so you know how much credit you have left.

If we see that your pattern of buying credit for your meter has changed, we may write or phone you to discuss why this is happening. We want to ensure that if there is a problem that we can help you to resolve it.

We will send you a quarterly

statement showing your consumption and your debt repaid payments and other useful information. If you are repaying a debt your quarterly statement will display your consumption, debt repaid, payments made and the amount of debt still outstanding.

8 How can I get a Pay As You Go Meter?

If you want to have a Pay As You Go Meter fitted contact us on **611 01 08** and we will discuss the request with you. We will agree to fit a Pay As You Go Meter as long as it is safe and practical to do so for you personally.

We recognise that our standard Pay As You Go Meters may not be suitable for you if you are housebound or your meter is in an unsuitable location.

In certain circumstances we may fit a standard Pay As You Go Meter free of charge if you are in financial hardship. Evidence of being in financial hardship will have to be supplied. We work closely with the relevant state agencies or state sponsored bodies, recognised charities or other financial advisers when deciding who is eligible for a free Pay As You Go Meter.

9 What happens during installation?

We will arrange a suitable time to install your Pay As You Go Meter. The fitter will then visit your home to carry out the work. They will show you their identity card and examine your existing meter to decide if it is safe and practical to fit a Pay As You Go Meter there.

When the meter has been fitted the fitter will test the meter to make sure everything is working properly.

Before the fitter arrives you will receive a leaflet on how to use the meter as well as two electricity Pay As You Go cards for purchasing electricity. You should keep this in a safe place to look at in future as it contains all the information you will need to operate your meter.

The meter fitter will provide some start-up credit on the meter, which you pay back later. This will give you time to go and buy credit.

10 Your Electricity top up card

Before your Pay As You Go Meter is installed you will receive 2 Electricity top up cards.

- To buy credit for your Pay As You Go Meter all you have to do is bring either of your electricity top up cards, together with your payment to your nearest Payzone outlet. Keep your receipt for proof of purchase.
- You should not purchase credit until after your meter has been installed by the fitter.

11 How do I buy credit?

To buy credit for your Pay As You Go Meter all you have to do is bring either of your Electricity top up cards, together with your payment to your nearest Payzone outlet.

Keep your receipt for proof of purchase.

There is a minimum amount of €10 credit and a maximum of €100 credit that you can put on your card at any one time, up to a total value of €300.

Look for shops with the Payzone sign or visit

www.payzone.ie/outlets or please check the opening times of the outlets in your area. Please do not purchase credit from unapproved vending facilities as we have no way of allocating this to your account and any credit purchased will not be effective.

Call us on **611 01 08** for any queries relating to the location and opening times of your nearest Payzone store.

12 What do I do with my receipt and Power Code?

Your receipt will have a **20 digit Power Code** printed on it. This code is important, as you will need to enter it into your meter to top up with your purchased credit.

13 How does it work?

When you visit a **Payzone** outlet give in your Electricity top up card and payment. You will then be issued a receipt which will have a **20 digit Power Code** printed on it.



14 How do I load my credit to my meter?

For Standard Pay As You Go Meters:

Press the (*) button on the keypad. The message **KEYCODE** will be displayed. Enter the **20 digit Power Code** as it is printed on your receipt. If you enter any of the numbers incorrectly you can erase it by pressing the (*) button. When you have entered all the numbers press the (#) button.

15 Emergency credit

If your emergency credit runs out during the week after 4pm (5pm summer time), the supply will not go off until 9am the following day (10am summer time). This will give you enough time to buy more electricity. If your emergency credit runs out after 4pm on a Friday, the supply will not go off until 9am (10am summer time) the following Monday. Your supply will also not go off on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, St. Stephen's Day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, or St. Patrick's Day. This extra time to purchase more electricity is called Friendly Credit. Remember, you will need to ensure that your next top up exceeds the total amount of emergency credit used, after payments towards any outstanding amount on your account.

You will get a warning when your credit reduces to €2. You will hear

an alarm which will sound for two minutes. To turn off this alarm, press the (0) button. It will be repeated every half hour until the button is pressed. For your convenience the alarm will not sound at night between 9pm and 9am (10pm and 10am in summer).

You will be supplied with €5 Emergency Credit which will be activated once you press the (0) button after the low credit alarm sounds. If you have not pressed the (0) button your supply will go off - however, simply press the (0) button and your supply will come back on after a few seconds.

NB: ALL customers should ensure to maintain credit on their meter at all times as the electricity supply will be cut off should they run out of both ordinary credit and emergency credit.

16 Standing charge and PSO Levy

The meter will deduct the standing charge element of your tariff each day at 12.00 am from the money you have on your meter display. This is part of the Pay As You Go tariff.

The amount of standing charge you pay daily is shown by pressing button **7** on the meter.

You will also pay the “PSO Levy” - this is the Public Service Obligation Levy which all electricity customers in Ireland have to pay under statute.

17 How does the keypad work?

The following screens may be useful to you:

- *** Key this before entering Power Codes.
- #** Key this after entering Power Codes.
- 1** Credit remaining and days remaining based on current consumption.
- 2** Previous days, weeks, month(s) cost.
- 3** Date and time.
- 4** The last five Power Codes keyed in.
- 5** Total money entered into meter.
- 6** Current load/load cost.
- 7** Standing charge rate per day followed by unit rate.
- 8** Maximum demand and time it occurred in previous 24 hours.
- 9** Total units used.
- 0** Display test.

18 Paying off debt with a standard Pay As You Go Meter

Sometimes if customers owe us money and have been unable to clear the debt through other payment plans, we may request that you choose a standard Pay As You Go Meter to avoid cutting off the electricity supply.

You will be sent a letter no later than two months after your debt has been repaid in full informing you that your debt has been repaid.

You can call us on **611 01 08** to get up to date information on your outstanding debt, how long it will take to pay off your debt and the total amount you have repaid.

19 What happens if I have an outstanding amount?

Each time you top up, a percentage of the top up (25%) will go towards paying any outstanding amount on your account. This will be shown on your receipt as a contribution to “PC” (Previous Charge), with the balance going towards your energy. Payment towards outstanding amounts will stop automatically once they have been cleared.

We will take your ability to pay into account and agree that the repayment arrangements are suitable.

A portion of credit purchased will **ALWAYS** be left for electricity.

If you wish at any other time to find out how much debt is still outstanding please call us on **611 01 08** . When you have paid off the debt fully we will write to you to tell you that the debt has been fully paid. We will then place you on the standard Pay As You Go tariff.

20 Refunds

If your standard Pay As You Go meter fails and you require a refund, you will require a site visit from ESB Networks who will apply a code to the meter in order that your refund applies. We will then issue you a cheque refund.

If you have credit on your meter and change supplier the credit is still on the meter for use with your new supplier.

In order to obtain a refund please contact us on **611 01 01** and we will discuss the process and your options with you.

21 Customers with special needs

The Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU) has put in place rules for the protection of vulnerable customers. If you are on our special services register, you will not be disconnected in Winter (November - March).

However, this rule will not apply if you choose to have a Pay As You Go Meter installed. Therefore, your electricity supply may be cut off if you do not maintain credit on your meter.

A PAYG meter may not be suitable for some vulnerable customers. You need to be able to access the meter and an outlet to buy credit. If a PAYG meter is not suitable for you then we can offer an alternative payment arrangement such as a payment plan.

If you would like to be included on our special services register, please call us on 611 01 01 for further information and an application form.

22 Complaints procedure

We aim to give you the best possible service. If however, you are unhappy with the service we have given you, please call us on **611 01 08** and we will try and resolve it over the telephone.

Alternatively you can write to:

Customer service
Electricity
Bord Gáis Energy
PO Box 10943, Dublin 2
or by email to elecinfo@bordgais.ie

It is our aim to settle any concerns as quickly and fairly as possible. If you write to us with a complaint, we will respond to you within ten business days. If you are unhappy with the response you receive from the first point of contact you may have your complaint reviewed at a higher level. Our commitment is that all complaints will be resolved within four weeks or an action plan will have been agreed with you. In all cases we will keep you informed about progress in resolving the matter.

We have a code of practice on handling customer's complaints. To receive a copy please call us on **611 01 08** or you may view it online at bordgaisenergy.ie

If following a review and formal response, you are still not satisfied that your complaint has been dealt with, and have received written notification of the closure of the

complaint from Bord Gáis Energy, then the matter can be referred to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) for a final review. The CRU operates as an independent review body and issues rulings on complaints on a case by case basis.

Your complaint may only be handled by the CRU after it has gone through Bord Gáis Energy's full complaints handling procedure.

The office of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities can be contacted by the following means:

Customer Care Team
Commission for Regulation of Utilities
PO Box 11934
Dublin 24

Tel: 1890 404 404

Fax: 01 4000 850

Email: customer-care@cru.ie

Web: www.cru.ie/customer-care

23 Useful contact information

For information and advice on use of your PAYG Meter, please call us on **611 01 08**.

For information to find your local Payzone store visit **www.payzone.ie/outlets** or call us on **611 01 08**.

If you are moving home you must give us at least 7 days notice before you move by phoning us on **611 01 08**.

If you experience technical problems with your standard meter please telephone ESB Networks on **1850 372 757**.

If you are concerned about a safety matter, please telephone **ESB Networks** on **1850 372 999**.

