



## Electricity

# Vulnerable Customers

CODE OF PRACTICE

BGE/RE/SCOP/0818

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## Caring for our customers

Bord Gáis Energy is committed to treating all of our customers both fairly and equally, and to providing special services for our customers with special needs. In particular, we are concerned about those residential customers who are dependent on home electrical medical equipment or have other special requirements.

That is why we have developed a priority support and special services register for customers who would prefer to have some of our services adapted to suit their needs.

This code of practice sets out the services we offer to customers on our priority support and special services registers.

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## Definition of a “Vulnerable Customer”

In law, a “vulnerable customer” is defined as a person who is

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

Based on this definition, Bord Gáis

Energy maintains and regularly reviews a Special Services Register and a Priority Support Register (electricity customers only).

### Special services register

We offer a special services register for customers who are particularly vulnerable to disconnection during the winter months for the following reasons:

- Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Customer aged 66 years or over who live alone and/or live with minors or others aged 66 or over
- Blind or Partially Sighted
- Mobility Difficulties
- Language Difficulties
- Speech Impaired
- Learning Difficulties
- Mental Health issues

We will take account of your specific needs and try to consider your individual requirements. We will forward details of customers who register with us to Gas Networks Ireland for inclusion in the industry register.

Please note that we may ask for proof of eligibility for inclusion on the register and this may include requesting medical information.

### Priority support register

If you or someone living in your household is dependent on home electrical equipment that is vital to your or their health we would like you to register with us.

Details of customers who register with us will be sent to ESB Networks for inclusion on the industry register. This will enable ESB Networks to identify those customers who are particularly vulnerable to an electricity supply interruption.

You qualify for the Priority Services Register if you are critically dependent on electricity and use **either** Life-Supporting and/or Non-Life Supporting Medical Equipment as specified:

### **Life support equipment**

Life support equipment

Home dialysis

Oxygen concentrator

Peg tube feeding pump

Personal suction machine

Total parental nutrition machine

Ventilator

### **Non-life support equipment**

Non-life support equipment

Electric hoist

Electric pressure relieving mattress

Household lift

Nebuliser

Or other electrically powered life supporting equipment that you specify on the registration form.

Please note that we may ask for proof of eligibility for inclusion on the register and this may include requesting medical information.

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## **Our promise**

- We will promote this code of practice so you can easily get a copy.
- We will train our staff to deliver the promises we make in this code, and will keep our training up to date.
- We will deal with all customer enquiries courteously and fairly while in accordance with stated policy.
- We will keep all the information you give us in the strictest confidence.
- We will ensure that all registered vulnerable customers are on the most economic tariff available for their chosen payment method.
- We will work with you in finding a suitable plan for settling your bills if you get into payment difficulties.
- We will publicise this Code of Practice and our registers at least once per year and on sign-up.
- We will ask you if you want to join our Special Services or Priority Support registers when you become a customer.
- We will provide you with a choice of ways to communicate with us.
- We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that registered priority support customers (those dependent on medical equipment) are not disconnected at the request of Bord Gáis Energy.
- We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that customers on our register are not disconnected at the request of

Bord Gáis Energy during the winter months November to March inclusive.

- If you say you want to register with us but do not return the form/s, we will follow up with you to check if you still want to register.
- We will make it easy for you to make a complaint.
- We will monitor the service we give to make sure we are keeping our promises.

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### Priority support register

We offer a priority support register for customers or anyone in the household who is reliant on electrical home medical equipment, both life supporting and non-life supporting.

If you depend on electrical equipment that is vital to your health, we would like you to register with us. This equipment includes home dialysis, oxygen concentrators, household lift, nebulisers, total parental nutrition machine, electric hoists etc.

Details of customers who register with us will be sent to ESB Networks for inclusion on the industry register. This will enable ESB Networks to identify those customers who are particularly vulnerable to an electricity supply interruption.

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### Special services register

Bord Gáis Energy offers a special services register for customers who are elderly, or have a hearing,

vision or mobility difficulty. Details of customers who register with us will be sent to ESB Networks for inclusion on the industry register.

Customers who register on the special services register can avail of the following services:

#### **Nominate a carer**

If you have a relative, carer or someone who would normally look after your bills, then you might want your Bord Gáis Energy bill to be sent directly to them. You just need to give us their name and address with your consent to redirect your bill. You can provide this information via the Special Services/Priority Services registration form or you can call us to do it.

With your permission, we can send them any correspondence on your behalf or contact them if we need to get in touch with you.

#### **Help with reading & understanding your bill**

We can help if you are blind or visually impaired. If you have difficulty reading your bill you can let us know and receive your bill in one of the following formats:

- **Braille bill**  
We will organise for a braille bill to be sent to you. It may take a little longer to arrive, but we can arrange your braille bill on request.
- **Talking bill**  
We make life easier by having a member of staff phone you with details of your latest bill. This

gives you the opportunity to ask any questions that you may have. We will still send you your bill in the normal way.

### **Difficulty with paying your bill**

Please tell us straight away if you have any difficulty in paying your bill. We will deal with each case individually and take your circumstances into account. We are committed to helping you keep your electricity supply and will only discontinue the supply if we have no other choice.

We will engage with Community Welfare Officers, Money Advice & Budgeting Services, Society of St Vincent de Paul or other recognised charities for help in paying your electricity bill, if you give us permission.

We will not disconnect customers for non-payment who are dependent on home life support medical equipment and who have registered with us on our Priority Support register.

We will not disconnect your supply between 1<sup>st</sup> November and 31<sup>st</sup> March if you are registered with us on our Special Services register.

We must, however, ultimately receive payment from you for the electricity that we supply.

### **Special communications services**

If you have hearing difficulties and you have a minicom you can get in touch with us using the following number:

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Minicom service: 1850 630 630

General customer enquiries:  
01 611 01 01

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Alternatively you can email us on **elecinfo@bordgais.ie** or send us a fax message on **01 611 01 02**. For customers who may be blind we can send you copies of our terms and conditions of supply, customer charter and codes of practice on CD or audio cassette by request.

### **Our Communications in Other Formats**

If you are on our register and have sight difficulties then we can provide our general communications in another format such as recorded onto a CD for you to listen to. Please let us know at any time if you require this.

The list of communications that we can provide in an appropriate format for customers with visual and hearing impairments includes:

- a. Household Customer Terms & Conditions
- b. Customer Charter
- c. Codes of Practice
- d. Residential Tariff Information
- e. The energy bill and the energy statement
- f. Personalised Residential Customer Communications (as approved by the CER)
- g. Outage Notifications
- h. Any letter to customers informing them of a change in services or tariff

- i. Any insert to customers that has been required by the CRU

### **Visiting your home**

Always make sure that any caller to your home, who says they are representing a company, is telling the truth. Don't let anyone into your home until you've seen proof of his or her identity. All our representatives who may visit your home will carry an identification card with their photograph on it.

If you still have doubts about the identity of the person at your door you can call us on **01 611 01 01** to make sure that the person is from Bord Gáis Energy.

Please don't feel embarrassed about asking for identification and always take the time to check the caller's identity thoroughly before you let them in. Our representatives won't mind at all.

### **Vulnerable Customers on Pay as You Go (PAYG) Meters**

Special Services customers can avail of a PAYG Meter as a way of budgeting for their energy. However, we will need to check that you can access the meter and an outlet to top-up.

If you have are on our register and you find that the PAYG meter is no longer suitable for you (e.g. as you cannot access it or an outlet), then we will exchange it for a credit meter free of charge.

We do not recommend a PAYG meter for customers on our Priority Services Register.

### **Interruptions to your electricity supply**

We realise that some customers may spend a lot of time at home and may depend on their electricity for medical equipment, heating and cooking facilities more than other groups of customers.

If your electricity supply goes off at any time, phone ESB Networks on **1850 372 999**.

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### **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 **01 611 01 01** and we will try to resolve the matter over the telephone.

#### **Alternatively you can write to:**

Customer service  
Residential electricity  
Bord Gáis Energy  
PO Box 10943, Dublin 2

By email to [\*\*elecinfo@bordgais.ie\*\*](mailto:elecinfo@bordgais.ie)

It is our aim to settle any concerns as quickly and as fairly as possible.

If you write to us with a billing query or complaint, we will respond to you within 10 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 either resolved within eight 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 customers' complaints.**

To receive a copy please call us on **01 611 01 01** or you may view it online at **www.bordgaisenergy.ie**

If following a review and written response from one of our customer care managers you are still not satisfied, and have received written notification of the closure of the complaint from Bord Gáis Energy, you may contact the Customer Care Team at the Commission for Energy Regulation of Utilities.

The complaint should only be passed to the commission after it has gone through the Bord Gáis Energy internal escalation process. The Commission operates as an independent review body and issues rulings on complaints on a case by case basis.

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

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**Address:**

Customer Care Team  
PO Box 11934, Dublin 24

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Tel: 1890 404 404

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Fax: 01 4000 850

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Email: [customercare@cru.ie](mailto:customercare@cru.ie)

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Web: [www.cru.ie/customer-care](http://www.cru.ie/customer-care)

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*Please note that Bord Gáis Energy is not in a position to resolve queries or issues relating to ESB Networks.*

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**Contact details**

We'd prefer you to phone rather than write because it is quicker, more direct and easier for us to answer your questions straight away. But if you want to write, our address is:

**Customer service  
Residential electricity  
Bord Gáis Energy  
PO Box 10943, Dublin 2**

In order to maintain the highest level of service we may record and monitor telephone calls.

Please ensure that you have your account number ready when you call us, as we can only discuss account information with the account holder.

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Customer service: 01 611 01 01

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Customer service fax: 01 611 01 02

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Customer service email:  
[elecinfo@bordgais.ie](mailto:elecinfo@bordgais.ie)

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Minicom: 1850 630 630

*(for hearing impaired customers with their own minicom equipment)*

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Visit our website at **www.bordgaisenergy.ie** to see more useful information on our services.

**For electricity supply failure and emergencies call ESB Networks 24 hour service on 1850 372 999.**

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

## **Residential electricity contact details**

**Tel: 01 611 01 01**

**Fax: 01 611 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

**[bordgaisenergy.ie](http://bordgaisenergy.ie)**

Please note that to maintain the highest level of service we may monitor and record calls.