



Natural Gas

Pay As You Go
meters

CODE OF PRACTICE

BGE/NG/PMCOP/0918



bordgaisenergy.ie

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

Residential gas contact details

Tel: 611 01 01

Fax: 611 01 02

info@bordgais.ie

Minicom: 1850 630 630

(for hearing impaired customers
with their own minicom equipment)

Customer service

Residential natural gas

Bord Gáis Energy

PO Box 10943, Dublin 2

Business gas contact details

Tel: 611 01 33

Fax: 611 01 02

businessdirect@bordgais.ie

Customer service

Business natural gas

Bord Gáis Energy

PO Box 10943, Dublin 2

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

Code of Practice

Natural gas

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 01**. 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 you are finding it hard to pay your bills, we may want to fit a 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.

2 What are Pay As You Go meters?

Pay As You Go meters are an excellent means of budgeting, as you pay for your gas as you use it. This means that you don't have bills coming in every two months. When the meter is installed, you get a Gas Card which you top up with credit at selected shops displaying the Payzone sign. You will usually have to buy more credit for your gas during the winter months when you use more energy. You can, of course, build up credit on your meter over the summer months to reduce the amount you have to spend in winter.

When you buy credit on your Gas Card and credit your meter you pay for:

- Your gas and
- A small daily standing 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 PAYG meter.

3 Advantages of a Pay As You Go meter

A Pay As You Go meter has several advantages:

- It lets you pay for gas as you use it instead of receiving a bill every two months.
- It can help you budget for your gas and keep track of how much you're spending on gas.
- You can build up credit over the summer period.
- 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 13 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.
- It 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 gas supply will stop.
- Your meter may be located in an awkward position for you to put in your credit.
- If you live in an apartment block, you may not have access at all to your meter; in this case we would not recommend a Pay As You Go meter.
- You pay the small standing charge daily. This will be deducted from your credit even if you are not using gas e.g. over the Summer or if you are away from home for a few days or weeks so you should make sure you have enough credit on your meter even when you are not using the gas; it should be noted that these payments are the same for non-Pay As You Go meter customers.
- If you do not top-up your meter with credit then your gas supply will cut-off.

5 How much will you pay for your gas?

The standard PAYG tariff is for customers who use a PAYG meter to help budget for future gas bills. This tariff consists of two elements. There is a daily standing charge and a single unit per kWh of gas used. This tariff is the same as the standard tariff for credit meter customers.

The prevailing price for gas supplied at the standard Pay As You Go tariff is set out in our residential tariff leaflet.

You can get a copy by calling **611 01 01** or view it online at **www.bordgaisenergy.ie**

6 Price of gas

We will let you know by way of an advertisement in the national media and on our website when the price for gas is changed. We will also send you a residential 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 gas changes as this can be changed remotely.

7 Paying for gas with a Pay As You Go meter

The meter uses your money in the following ways;

- To pay for gas 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 PAYG meter can only be used to pay for gas and not any other product/ service.

The meter will display exactly how much credit you have left to use at any time. You will then know when you should buy more credit for your meter. Every time you insert the card in your meter after you have purchased credit, the display will increase by the amount you have purchased towards future gas usage.

Check your meter display regularly so you know how much money you have left to use gas.

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 payments and other useful information. If you are repaying a debt your quarterly statement will display your consumption, debt re-paid, 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 01** 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 Pay As You Go meters may not be suitable for you if you are housebound or your meter is in an awkward place which makes it hard to get at to put in your credit. For example, if it is:

- Too high.
- In a small cupboard which is hard to get into.
- Inside a unit that you do not have access to.

If you want a Pay As You Go meter for budgeting purposes only, there is an additional charge for installation as these meters are more expensive than a standard credit meter.

In certain circumstances we may fit a 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 Gas Networks Ireland fitter will then visit your home to carry out the work. They will show 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.

The meter fitter will;

- Show you how to use the meter.
- Explain about emergency credit.
- Leave a leaflet which gives you more information about the meter. You should keep this in a safe place to look at in the future as it contains all the information you will need to operate your meter.
- Give you your own Gas Card, which you must put into the meter **BEFORE** you go to the Payzone shop to buy credit.
- Provide some start-up credit on the meter, which you pay back later. This will give you time to go and buy credit.

Call us on **611 01 01** for any queries relating to your nearest Payzone store.

10 Your Gas Card

When your Pay As You Go meter is installed initially you will be given a Gas Card.

- Once you have received a new card you must insert it into the meter **BEFORE** you buy credit.
- Leave your Gas Card in the meter for at least 30 seconds until the display no longer shows 'Busy'.
- You can then purchase your credit in the usual way.
- The Gas Card may only be used for the premises for which it was allocated.
- Only one Gas Card may be in use at any time.

You should mind your card as replacement cards can only be obtained by buying one at a Payzone outlet for €1.

11 Buying gas credit

You can buy credit from a local shop with the Payzone sign. Just bring your Gas Card together with your payment to the outlet.

- There is a minimum amount of €10 and a maximum of €50 that you can put on your card at any one time.
- Keep your receipt for proof of purchase and in case of any dispute.

Look for shops with the Payzone sign or visit www.payzone.ie/outlets. Please check the opening times of the outlets in your area. Call us on **611 01 01** for any queries relating to your nearest Payzone store.

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.

12 How to transfer the credit to your meter

Once you have bought credit your Gas Card should be inserted into the meter.

- When inserting your Gas Card, please make sure that the gold coloured chip on the card faces towards the meter display.
- To transfer your money to the meter, press the red button. The display will show 'Busy'.
- The card should only be removed when 'Busy' is no longer displayed, otherwise your card may be damaged.

If the valve has previously been closed off (e.g. if the meter has run out of credit) then the meter will show OFF and ask you to check that your appliances are switched off - this is a safety feature.

- When you are sure the appliances are off, press and hold the red button until the valve opens.

If you have an amount showing on the 'OWED' screen the meter will use some of the inserted credit. The meter display will now tell you how much money you have left for gas.

13 Emergency credit

If the credit on your meter falls below a certain level you can use the €5 emergency credit on your meter. This can be borrowed until you buy some more credit.

- If you want to use your emergency credit, insert your Gas Card into your meter and you will be offered emergency credit.
- To accept it, press the red button.
- If you wish to see how much emergency credit you have used and owe, remove the Gas Card, press and release the red button.

If you use any emergency credit you must pay it all back before you can borrow the whole amount again.

Bord Gáis Energy advises against using the emergency credit facility too often as it causes debt to build up on your meter. When using emergency credit the standing charge element of your Pay As You Go tariff is not paid. Instead this builds up as a debt which is recovered the next time you buy credit.

14 Refunds

If your meter fails, or for any other reason you are entitled to a refund from us, we will let you know and you can collect this credit refund by taking your card to your Payzone store and asking for a credit update.

If you are buying credit the refund will also be put on your card. To transfer the refund to your meter follow the instructions in 12 above.

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. You will be charged for a Gas Networks Ireland site visit in order to obtain your refund.

15 Standing charge

The meter will deduct the standing charge element of your tariff each day at 2.00 am from the money you have on your meter display. This is part of the Pay As You Go tariff.

- If you have no credit left on the meter, the daily standing charge will be added to the amount shown on the 'OWED' screen and is recovered the next time you purchase credit.

- The amount of standing charge you pay daily is shown on screen 17 of the meter.

16 Natural Gas Allowance (NGA)

For customers who receive the Natural Gas Allowance from the Department of Social and Family Affairs:

- When your allowance is due you should bring your Gas Card to your nearest Payzone outlet to put the credit amount on your card.
- You don't need to purchase credit to collect your allowance, ask the assistant for a 'credit update' and your Natural Gas Allowance will be put on your Gas Card.
- You should always be given a receipt when obtaining your Natural Gas Allowance from your local Payzone outlet.
- Your receipt will have a balance of €0.00 which is correct and will display the message 'your card has been updated by your shipper'.
- If a receipt is not printed and you are advised there is a zero balance on your card you may need to ask your local agent to confirm they choose 'credit update'.

If you are buying additional credit, the Natural Gas Allowance will also be put on your Gas Card at this time. To transfer the allowance onto your meter follow the instructions in 12 above.

17 Meter information

Further information on your meter can be viewed by pressing and holding the red button for three seconds until you hear a beep. The meter will show a screen number in the top right hand corner of the meter display. To look at each screen, keep pressing the red button.

The following screens may be useful to you;

- 00 How much money you last put into the meter.
- 01 Last amount of money taken to repay gas & general debt (if applicable).
- 02 Last amount of money taken to repay emergency credit.
- 03 Last amount given for gas.
- 17 Daily amount deducted for standing charge that is taken at 2.00 am each day.
- 27 The amount of Gas Debt Remaining
- 31 The amount of non-gas debt remaining
- 36 The amount of emergency credit that has been used but not yet repaid.
- 32 Reference number, the last six characters for your unique Gas Point Registration Number (GPRN).

18 Paying off debt with a 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 you to choose a Pay As You Go meter to avoid cutting off the gas supply. In this case we will contact you before hand to explain that we want to change the meter and ensure that it is safe and practicable for you to operate a Pay As You Go meter and that there is a suitable Payzone shop in your area.

When you are repaying a debt with a Pay As You Go meter we will put the debt onto the PAYG Meter and every time you put your card into the meter, a percentage (25%) will go towards re-paying the debt.

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

You can find out how much debt you still owe by looking at the screens on the Meter itself. Press Code 27 on the Meter to see how much gas debt there is remaining. Please call us on **611 01 01** to find out how long it will take to pay off your debt and the total amount you have repaid. When you have paid off the debt fully we will write to you within 2 months to tell you that the debt has been fully paid.

If you are repaying a debt with your PAYG meter, we will send you a statement 3 times a year.

19 Customers with Special Needs

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.

The CRU has put in place a rule that registered vulnerable customers cannot be disconnected in winter months (November to March). However, this rule will not apply if you choose to have a Pay As You Go Meter installed. Therefore, your gas 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.

20 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 01 and we will try and resolve it over the telephone.

Alternatively you can write to:

Customer service
Natural gas
Bord Gáis Energy
PO Box 10943, Dublin 2
or by email to **info@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 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 customer's complaints. To receive a copy please call us on **611 01 01** or you may view it online at **www.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: customercare@cru.ie

Web: www.cru.ie/customer-care

21 Useful contact information

For information and advice on use of your PAYG Meter, please call us on **611 01 01**. For information to find your local Payzone store visit **www.payzone.ie/outlets** or call us on **611 01 01**.

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

If your meter displays 'gas off' or 'call help' or there is a battery problem please call Gas Networks Ireland on **1850 200 694**.

If you smell gas or are concerned about a safety matter, please telephone Gas Networks Ireland 24 hour Emergency Service on **1850 20 50 50**.

