

HIGH ENERGY BILLS

- **Tips for High Electricity or Gas bills**
- **Check your bills**
- **Check your usage**
- **Seek advice**

Check your bills

Does your high bill include previous amounts you haven't paid?

Did you receive your last bill?

Did you pay all of it?

If you didn't receive a bill, or you only paid part of it, this high bill probably includes an amount you still owe.

If this has been happening for a while, the amount you owe will be building up.

If that's the case you should contact your energy retail company to arrange a payment plan to pay it off.

Your energy retail company can also offer suggestions to help you manage paying your future bills.

Have your recent bills been based on estimates of your usage?

Your energy retail company may estimate your usage, but it must read your meter at least once a year.

To see whether your bills have been estimated, check your last few bills for the word 'estimated' or the letter 'e' beside the meter readings.

Estimated bills are usually based on the amount of electricity or gas you've used in the past. This may be more, or less, than the amount you actually used in the period that was estimated.

After your meter is read, you'll be charged for any usage above the estimate.

Your high bill may include a 'catch-up' amount of this type.

If you think your high bill may include 'catch-up' amounts from estimated bills, but you aren't sure, ask your energy retail company.

Check your usage

Have you used more electricity or gas than you usually do?

You can use your bills to keep an eye on your household's average usage over time.

Compare the average daily use figure on your high bill with the average daily use figures on your previous bills (including the bill you received for the same time last year).

If it's a lot higher, have you:

- Been at home more?
- Used some appliances more? (e.g. the heater, clothes dryer, fan, air-conditioning or pool)
- Had people staying with you? (e.g. more showers, more cooking, more washing)
- Bought new equipment or appliances?
- Undertaken some renovations?
- Used electric tools more? (e.g. a welder)
- Changed from gas to electric when you moved house?

Is your usage still high?

You can use your meter to check whether your usage has increased and come back down, or increased and stayed high.

- Take a meter reading at a set time on a typical day for your household (be careful not to change your usual usage pattern).
- Take another reading at the same time the next day.
- The difference between the two will be the amount you used in the last day (24 hours).
- Compare this with the 'average daily use' figure on your high bill.
- If it's about the same, your usage is still high and you may need some advice about managing it. (see 'Do you need more help?' later in this fact sheet.)



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MAYBE THERE'S A LEAK

Here's a way to check for gas leaks

- The first sign of a gas leak may be the smell of gas. You may also see dead plants near the pipe.
- You can use your gas meter to check for a leak.
- Turn all of your gas appliances off completely.
- Check whether your gas meter dial is moving.
- If it is, there may be a leak in a pipe or appliance.
- If you suspect a leak, you should ring your gas retail company for advice.
- You may need to have a licensed gas fitter to inspect your pipes.

What else can cause high bills?

Some appliances or equipment use more electricity or gas than others. How and when you use them can also increase your bills.

Here are some examples (with the bills they may affect in brackets).

- Using an oil column heater or an electric wall heater (electricity).
- Running a large, old or faulty refrigerator or one that doesn't shut properly (electricity).
- Leaving the TV, DVD, video or CD player on standby (electricity).
- Setting a faulty off-peak hot water service to a high temperature (electricity).
- Using a hot water booster or day/night switch a lot at peak rate charges (electricity).
- Holes in the ducts of central heating systems – ducts should be serviced every couple of years and checked for holes (gas).
- A faulty thermostat on your hot water service or heater (electricity or gas).
- Having no blinds or curtains (electricity or gas).
- Poor roof insulation that allows draughts in, and hot or cool air out (electricity or gas).
- Setting slab heating above 18° C or gas heating above 20° C (electricity or gas).
- Turning the spa or pool heat up (electricity or gas).

Where to get more advice

Do you need more help?

This fact sheet will give you a good start, but here are some ways to get more information.

- Your electricity or gas retail company will have information about how much energy different appliances use.
- Some energy retail companies also have interactive programs on their web sites that can help you understand how your home uses energy.
- Contact the Energy Division Advisory Service: Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure Level 8, ANZ Building 11 Waymouth Street, Adelaide SA 5000
Phone: (08) 8204 1888
Fax: (08) 8204 1880
Email: energy.sa@saugov.sa.gov.au

Maybe it's not your usage or appliances.

There could be a problem with your meter, or with other equipment owned by the energy company.

- Ring your energy retail company and explain your concerns.
- Explain the steps you've taken to check your appliances and usage.
- Ask what the energy retail company can test (e.g. pipes, meter).
- Ask whether you'll be charged for this testing.

What if you contact your energy retail company and you're not satisfied with its response?

Don't be put off.

If the first person you speak with can't help you, ask to speak with someone at a higher level (e.g. a manager or supervisor).

If you are not satisfied with the action your energy retail company takes to address your concerns, you can contact EIOSA for further assistance.



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