



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW

Common hot water systems



What is a common hot water system?

A common hot water system is a centralised hot water service that supplies hot water to all units in a building. They are used in place of individual hot water systems.

Water boilers for common hot water systems can hold thousands of litres of water and are generally heated by gas, although electric boilers exist in some older developments. Pipes from the boilers deliver hot water to each unit in the building and each unit has its own meter that measures the amount of hot water used.

How do I read my meter?

To read your meter, read all the black numbers from left to right and the first two red numbers.

The meter reading here is 105161.

How is my bill calculated?

- You are billed for the energy in megajoules (MJ) used to heat the amount of hot water (measured in decalitres) you used. One decalitre equals 10 litres.
- A conversion factor is calculated to determine how much energy in MJ was used to heat the total amount of hot water used in the building. The conversion factor equals the average MJ of gas (that is the amount of energy used) to heat each decalitre of hot water used in your block of units for the billing period.
- Each unit's hot water meter records the amount of hot water used. The usage recorded by your hot water meter is then multiplied by the conversion factor so you are then charged for energy in MJ used to heat the amount of hot water you used.
- The amount of hot water (decalitres) you used is calculated by subtracting the start read from the end read for the billing period. The metered units are then multiplied by the conversion factor to calculate the MJ of energy used.



Gas providers present usage calculations differently on bills and some refer to the conversion factor as the 'pressure factor'

What happens if my meter can't be read?

Hot water meters are often located inside a unit and can be difficult for a meter reader to access.

Some meters can be read using a device called a meter data logger (MDL) which transmits the meter readings from the internal hot water meter to a panel elsewhere in the building. This means the meter reader does not need to enter each unit to take a reading from the meter.

If the hot water meter is inside your unit and there is no MDL you may receive estimated bills. You can contact your gas retailer to provide a self-read or to arrange access to your meter so an actual read can be taken.





Why is my conversion factor high?

The following conditions may lead to a high conversion factor.

- The number of people using the system: if there is a high rate of vacancy in the building the system will still consume gas to maintain the predetermined temperature. If less hot water is used than the system was designed for, more energy is used to heat each litre of water.
- The efficiency of the hot water system: a system that is not well maintained will need greater amounts of gas to heat water to the predetermined temperature.
- The temperature settings: the higher the temperature is set the more gas is needed to heat the water to that temperature.
- The condition and insulation of the pipework: water cools down if it is stationary in the pipework and the pipework is not well insulated.
- The distance from the hot water system: water in the pipes will cool over time resulting in cold water passing through the tap before hot water starts flowing. This is all recorded as hot water usage through your hot water meter.

➤ Most high conversion factors are due to the hot water system not operating efficiently. The Body Corporate, building owner or NSW Housing manager is responsible for maintaining an efficient hot water system. Your complaint should be referred to them.

For more information on high bills, see our factsheets at ewon.com.au/factsheets.

Why is my bill high?



- ✓ Does your bill include previous amounts you haven't paid?
- ✓ Did the price increase?
- ✓ Is the billing period longer?
- ✓ Is there a dripping hot water tap in your home?
- ✓ Have you used more hot water than you usually do?
- ✓ Has your bill been estimated?
- ✓ Is the conversion factor high?

Contact EWON

Freecall	1800 246 545 Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm
Freefax	1800 812 291
Freepost	Reply Paid 86550 Sydney South NSW 1234
Interpreter	131 450
TTY/Voice	133 677
Email	complaints@ewon.com.au
Website	ewon.com.au

* If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and we will call you back.

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