



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW

Estimated bills

Customers with remotely read smart meters

Smart meters come with mobile communications technology built in so that your retailer can read the meter remotely without visiting your property.

If you have a smart meter with the communications technology, you should not receive an estimated bill. If you do, you should contact your retailer to ask why.

It must be clearly stated on your bill if your meter reading has been estimated.



Customers with non-digital meters

How often should meters be read?

An authorised meter reader can enter properties to read the meter without prior consent and will attempt to visit every property once every three months. Your retailer then uses the meter readings and usage data to bill customers. If the meter reader is unable to access the meter, the account will be billed on an 'estimated' meter read.

Why wasn't my meter read?

Customers have an obligation to provide safe and unhindered access to the meter. However, the most common reason for a meter not being read is because the meter reader couldn't access the meter on the scheduled read date. This may be due to:

- locked or closed gates
- dog/s preventing access
- the meter being in an inaccessible place, such as inside the property or, for a business, in a shop which is not open when the meter reader visits
- adverse weather events.

If the meter reader is unable to access the meter, your retailer will send you a bill based on an estimated meter read. If the circumstances preventing access to the meter change – for example, you no longer have a dog, or the gate is no longer locked – you need to tell your retailer about the change. It is important that the meter reader has up-to-date information.

Other reasons a meter reading cannot be obtained include if your meter is deemed faulty or if you have solar panels switched on and you do not have the appropriate digital meter.

Estimated bills are issued when actual meter readings cannot be taken from your meter.

It is important to understand your rights and responsibilities if you receive a bill based on an estimated meter read.

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

After the meter is next read, the bill will be adjusted for any usage above or below the estimate. If the estimated bill is below actual usage, a catch-up bill, also known as a backbill, will be issued. Similarly, if the estimated bill is above actual usage, the next bill may be less than expected.

How is an estimated bill calculated?

If your provider has your billing history, the estimate should be based on an average of your previous usage taking into account any seasonal usage pattern. If your provider doesn't have your usage history, for example if you changed retailers or moved in recently, the estimation will be based on the average usage of a comparable customer.

My meter looks digital – why am I getting estimated bills?

Some digital meters in NSW are currently not 'smart meters'. This means that they do not have mobile communications technology built in and cannot be read remotely. The meter reader must still attend your property to download the data. Sometimes there can be problems when the data is collected, which should be rectified when your next meter read is done and your next bill may be adjusted.

What if I don't want to leave my house unsecured for the meter reader?

You can request a distributor lock, sometimes referred to as an e-lock. The meter reader will have a master key that can open all e-locks, but the customer's key can only open their own lock. The e-lock is installed at the customer's expense.

Can I provide a self-read?

Your retailer may not accept a self-read if you have a smart meter, which is a meter that records your energy consumption in at least 30 minute intervals.

If you do not have a smart meter, and you receive a bill based on an estimated reading, you can ask your provider to adjust the bill by providing your own meter reading. You must provide the self-read before the due date of the estimated bill. Your retailer must inform you of this option when you receive an estimated bill and give you information about how to lodge a self-read and what information they need to adjust the estimated bill.

What is a special meter read?

A special meter read is an actual meter reading taken outside of the usual reading cycle. If you are concerned your bill is high because the estimated read is incorrect, you can ask your retailer for a special meter read. The retailer is permitted to charge customers a special meter read fee for this service, but only if the meter reading used for the bill is confirmed as being correct.

If you continue to restrict access to the meter following requests for access, your energy retailer can take steps to disconnect your supply.



Make a complaint or enquiry

Freecall	1800 246 545* Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm
Freepost	Reply Paid 86550 Sydney South NSW 1234
Interpreter	131 450
TTY/Voice	133 677
Online	ewon.com.au
In person	Call us and we can arrange an appointment

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