

NIE Energy Limited

NIE Energy supplies electricity to around 780,000 homes and businesses in Northern Ireland. We aim to provide customers with great value for money and the highest standards of customer service. We are also committed to helping customers use electricity wisely, take advantage of 'renewable energy' options and protect the environment.

Telephone Customer Helpline 08457 455 455.

Only English is spoken at our Call Centres. Lines open 8am to 8pm, Mon-Fri and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. Calls recorded for quality assurance purposes.

E mail home@nieenergy.co.uk

Web www.nieenergy.co.uk

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Domestic Customer Charter

Thank you for choosing NIE Energy as your electricity supplier. We provide you with the following services: Meter Reading, Billing, Payment options, Moving House, Energy Savings and General Advice.

Our Commitment

- Have caring and knowledgeable staff to help advise you on all the services we provide
- Ensure our services are accessible to all our customers
- Give you a choice of payment options
- Produce clear and accurate bills
- Provide help if you have difficulty paying
- Make it easy for you to transfer your account when you move home or switch to another supplier
- Provide special help and advice for our most vulnerable customers
- Make it easy for you to contact us
- Deal quickly and effectively to resolve any problems you tell us about
- Make a Guaranteed Standard Payment (£25) if we fail to respond to a query on your bill or miss an appointment, within the agreed timescales
- Provide a list of advice agencies that may be of help to you.

Details of these are available on our website or by contacting our Customer Helpline. Our Codes of Practice give information regarding the many different services we provide. The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation has approved the Codes of Practice under the terms and conditions of our Supply Licence. We have also consulted with the Consumer Council.

Our Terms and Conditions and the tariff that applies to your supply, form the legally binding contract between you and NIE Energy. You can download a copy of these in English from the website at www.nieenergy.co.uk.

Codes of Practice

1. Paying for electricity

We issue bills every three months for electricity you have already used. Payment is due within 14 days and we offer a range of different ways to pay.

- Monthly Saver - pay an agreed amount by direct debit from your bank/building society account every month and get 4% discount, saving up to £40 a year (£10 a quarter)
- Quarterly Saver - pay the full amount of each quarterly bill by direct debit from your bank/building society account and get 2.5% discount, saving up to £26 a year (£6.50 a quarter)
- By Post - send your cheque payable to NIE Energy Ltd. with the bill tear-off slip in the FREEPOST envelope provided.
- Debit Card - by phone through the Customer Helpline or on-line at www.nieenergy.co.uk
- Any Post Office - cheques should be made payable to Post Office Ltd.
- Any PayPoint or payzone outlet - only cash payments can be accepted
- Any Bank - Bank of Ireland do not charge for this service but other banks may.

No more bills with a 'Pay as you Go' Keypad Meter

Similar to buying mobile phone top-ups, Keypad meters are ideal for those who prefer to budget weekly. You will have no more paper bills, just 'Pay as you Go'. You will get 2.5% discount off the standard rate and can buy top-ups online, over the telephone 24 hours a day or from many local agents. Details of these are available on the website: www.nieenergy.co.uk. Installation is free and the customer friendly displays will help you manage your electricity usage. If you are interested in a keypad meter please contact us.

High Bills

When a higher-than-usual bill arrives many customers suspect their meter may be faulty, however this is rarely the case. Before calling our Helpline about a high bill please check the following:

- Was your last bill estimated (it may have been a low estimate and this bill is 'catching up').
- Are you comparing a winter bill to a summer bill.
- Have your circumstances at home changed, for example a child returning from university or the arrival of a new baby. This can increase the amount of electricity used around the home.
- Have you installed any new equipment, for example a tumble drier or an electric heater.

If you have carried out these checks and are still concerned about a high bill please do not hesitate to get in touch.

On the move

It is important to open or close your account properly. If not, you may end up being billed for electricity used by someone else. Call our Customer Helpline a few days before you move.

Estimated bills

If our meter reader misses you when he visits, we will use an estimated reading to produce your bill. These are usually quite accurate. However if you provide your own reading within 24 hours of the meter reading visit we will use that instead. You can do this by:

Telephone - call 08456 093 030 when prompted provide your name, address, customer number and meter reading. Lines open 24 hours a day.

Email - send your name, address, customer number and meter reading to meter.reading@nie.co.uk

2. Customers with Payment difficulties

Our Promise

Our experienced staff will work with you to agree a repayment plan to suit your budget.

Our aim

Our aim is to prevent customers finding themselves in a debt situation by offering timely advice and a range of payment methods that will suit their needs.

Our Commitment

NIE Energy recognises that some customers will have difficulty paying for their electricity. We are committed to helping customers overcome temporary or longer-term financial difficulties. We will:

- Adopt a positive, caring and helpful attitude.
- Listen carefully to understand the problem and establish all the facts
- Discuss the payment options available and move towards a solution.
- If necessary, refer you to your local advice centre, to help reach a satisfactory solution.

Your Responsibility

When you register as a customer of NIE Energy you agree to take and pay for electricity under our terms and conditions. A copy of these are available on our website or by contacting our Customer Helpline.

We need you to:

- Contact us immediately to make us aware of any short or long-term difficulties you may have.
- Be open and honest about your situation and ability to pay for your electricity.
- Agree to keep to a repayment plan that suits your budget

Independent Advice

If you have concerns about approaching NIE Energy about your payment difficulties, you should contact your local Citizens Advice or Independent Advice NI Agency. They may be able to offer you help. Details of these are available on our website or by contacting our Customer Helpline. Please do not ignore the situation, as it only makes it harder to resolve.

3. Using your pay-as-you-go Keypad meter

Power at your fingertips

A Keypad meter is an easy 'Pay As You Go' way of buying electricity. It helps you to keep a check on the amount of electricity you use and can save you money with a 2.5% discount off the standard unit rate.

Benefits of a Keypad meter?

- You are in control, no more paper bills, just 'Pay As You Go'.
- 2.5 % discount off the standard unit rate
- Free installation
- A customer friendly display, which helps you manage your electricity usage.

How do I buy electricity?

You can buy "top ups" from any Post Office, Paypoint or Payzone agent. A list of agents are available on our website. You can also buy from home with a debit card, by calling our Customer Helpline 08457 455 455 (24 hour service) or on-line at www.nieenergy.co.uk

How much can I buy?

You can buy in multiples of £1, any amount from £5 - £175. Each time you buy you will get a 20 digit number which you simply key into your meter.

What if I lose the 20-digit number?

Simply call our customer helpline or visit the agent where you made the payment and you will be given the 20-digit number free of charge.

How will I know how much credit I have left?

Press button # to show the amount of credit you have left. Press button 1 to show the number of days usage you have left.

Will I get any warning if my credit is low?

Yes, if your credit reduces to £1 you will hear an alarm for 2 minutes, every half hour, except during the hours of 10pm to 8am. Press any button to turn off the alarm.

What happens if my credit runs out?

You will automatically get £1 emergency credit when you press a button to switch off the low credit alarm.

What happens if my emergency credit runs out?

We provide extra emergency credit called "Friendly Credit" to give you enough time to buy another top-up. If your emergency credit runs out during the week after 4pm, your electricity will not go off until 8am the following day. If your emergency credit runs out after 4pm on a Friday, your electricity will not go off until 8am (or 11am by request) the following Monday. Remember, the next time you buy a top-up, any emergency credit used will be deducted from your payment.

How can a Keypad meter help me reduce the electricity I use?

The keypad can tell you your electricity costs over the last day, week, or month. You can also look at the electricity you are currently using (1 kilowatt (kw) x 1 hour = 1 unit of electricity) allowing you to work out what each appliance uses.

Keypad Powershift

NIE Energy Keypad customers may save money with Keypad Powershift, our time of day tariff. Low cost electricity is available every evening, all weekend and during the daytime Monday to Friday. For more information about Powershift please phone our Helpline.

How do I get a Keypad meter?

- Phone our Customer Helpline 08457 455 455
- E-mail us at home@nieenergy.co.uk

Please note, it may not always be possible to fit a Keypad meter, depending on the wiring in your home.

4. Economy 7

Heat your home

- Storage heaters use only low rate electricity
- They heat automatically during the night and give out heat the following day
- They will feel hottest in the morning.

Getting the most from your storage heaters

Input Control)

Use a high setting in winter and a lower setting in milder weather.

Output/boost control

A high setting will provide more heat in the afternoon while a lower setting will boost later in the evening.

Economy 7 Automatic

With Economy 7 Automatic the 'input' and 'output' controls should be set at 'high' all year round. The heat stored overnight by your storage heaters will be adjusted automatically depending on the weather.

Storage heater safety!

Never cover storage heaters with clothes or curtains or put furniture against them. This is a serious fire risk.

Energy Saving Tips

Fresh air

Windows left open all day will let valuable heat escape, leaving you cold in the evening. Open windows for around one hour each day to provide a good balance of fresh air and comfortable heating.

Draught proofing

Draughts will make you feel cold, even in a well-heated room so make sure your windows and doors are properly sealed. If you are receiving benefits or a state pension you may be able to get help with this. An unused open chimney will also let valuable heat escape, especially on windy days.

Savings on household appliances

Economy 7 provides seven hours of low rate electricity every day, between 1am and 8am in winter and 2am and 9am in summer (times may vary slightly - if in doubt please call 08457 455 455). Your fridge and freezer will automatically benefit but you can make further savings by using washing machines, tumble driers and dishwashers during the low cost periods. For safety reasons it is best to use appliances towards the end of the low rate period so they can be supervised.

Hot water

Economy 7 will provide a full cylinder of hot water each morning and depending on the wiring a one hour 'top-up' in the afternoon. Economy 7 water heating is usually controlled by your own time switch or by an N.I.E. teleswitch.

Time switch for hot water

Make sure it is showing the correct time of day and set to bring your immersion heater on during the low cost periods.

Immersion Heater Switches

Turn both switches in your hot-press to the 'on' position. If you need a 'top-up' turn the switch in the kitchen to the 'on' position - one hour should be sufficient.

NIE Energy and the Energy Saving Trust advice Centre are working together to help reduce the energy used in your home. For further information on the latest grants and offers for heating, insulation, lighting and appliances visit; www.nie-yourenergy.co.uk or contact the Energy Saving Advice Centre on Freephone 0800 512 012

5. Using energy efficiently

NIE Energy and the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre are working together to help reduce the energy used in your home. Follow our three-step guide and start your journey to saving energy and money while helping the environment.

Step 1. Read through the tips below and see what you can start doing today.

Step 2. Complete the Energy Saving Trust free home energy check. To obtain a copy call them at on 0800 512 012 or visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Step 3. When you receive your report from the Energy Saving Trust in the post, act upon the recommendations to help reduce your energy use at home.

No Cost steps

- Don't leave your TV or other appliances on standby – they are still using electricity.
- Switch off your lights when you are not using them.
- Close curtains when it gets dark to keep the heat in – don't let curtains hang over the radiators.
- Use a jug kettle for boiling water and only boil as much water as you need – make sure the element is covered.

Low Cost steps

- Fit an insulating jacket on the hot water cylinder and insulate the water pipes.
- Fit energy saving light bulbs – they use 80% less electricity and last 10 times longer.
- Install loft insulation that is at least 270mm deep – this can save around 20% off your heating costs.
- Fit reflector panels behind the radiators especially those on the outer walls.

For more energy saving tips for your home call the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre on 0800 512 012 or visit www.nie-yourenergy.co.uk

6. Making a complaint

How & where do I complain?

As your electricity supplier, NIE Energy provides you with the following services: Meter Reading, Billing, Payment options, Moving House, Energy Savings and General Advice.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of our customer service, please let us know. We promise to deal fairly and effectively with your complaint and do everything we can to reach a satisfactory outcome. Most importantly we aim to learn from complaints, to prevent recurrence and to improve the service we provide to our customers.

Making a complaint

If you have a complaint about any of the services we provide, please let us know. We have a Customer Helpline where you can talk to experienced staff, who are ready to help and answer any questions you have. If they cannot sort out the problem to your complete satisfaction, you can ask to talk to a supervisor or manager. They will get involved to understand your concerns and try to fully resolve the matter. We will make every effort to sort out your complaint and provide you with an answer as quickly as possible.

However if you are not happy with our decision or explanation, you can ask for your complaint to be looked at again by our Head of Customer Service. Write to:

Head of Customer Service
NIE Energy Limited
120 Malone Road
Belfast BT9 5HT

or alternatively e-mail complaints@nieenergy.co.uk

We aim to resolve all complaints received within 10 working days.

Independent Advice

If we are unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, or if at any time you are unhappy with our response you can contact the Consumer Council. They are an independent body who may be able to help you. Their contact details are:

Consumer Council
Elizabeth House
116 Holywood Road
BELFASTBT4 1NY
E mail: complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk
Website: www.consumercouncil.org.uk
Telephone: 0845 601 6022

7. Customer Care

We care about all our customers but are particularly concerned about customers with special requirements. We have a range of services available, with our confidential Customer Care Register. You may wish to join and benefit from some of the services offered.

Doorstep Service

If you have a hearing difficulty we will knock the door louder and speak clearly when we call to read your meter. If you have a mobility problem we will allow more time for you to answer the door.

Password Scheme

If you are worried about bogus callers, you can give us a password to use each time we call. This will give you extra protection and may be useful if you are partially sighted or blind. Please choose a password you will remember easily, for example the name of a pet.

Services for customers who are hard of hearing or deaf

If you have any queries on bills, payments or moving house please contact us by e-mail at home@nieenergy.co.uk. Alternatively, you can provide us with details of a relative or carer who can then contact us on your behalf

Carers Contact Service

If someone helps you to manage your bills, we can post the bills directly to them. We can also contact them if we need to reach you at any time.

Braille Bill

If you are blind, we can send a copy of your bill and all other correspondence in Standard Braille.

Large Print Bill

If you have a sight difficulty, we can send a copy of your bill and all other correspondence in large print.

Special Advice

We will try our best to resolve any concerns you may have by phone. If we can't we will arrange a visit to your home.

To tell us which of these service(s) you would like, please e-mail home@nieenergy@nie.co.uk or write to:

NIE Energy Customer Care Register
FREEPOST BEL 3746 PO Box 2
Danesfort
120 Malone Road
BELFAST
BT9 5BR.

Power Failure

Plan ahead

- Keep a torch (with spare batteries) in a convenient place
- Find out where your meter box is and make sure you have easy access
- Find out if you have a 'trip switch'. This may switch off your electricity if there is a faulty appliance in your home

Is the fault only in your home?

- Ask a neighbour if their electricity is off, or at night-time check to see if the streetlights are on
- If you have a 'trip switch', which is easy to reach, check that it is in the 'ON' position
- If you have a 'Pay-as-you-go Keypad Meter' you may simply need to buy a 'top-up'

If the fault is in your own home please contact your own electrician or the Landlord/property owner in rented accommodation.

What to do in a power cut

- If you still have no electricity after making the above checks please telephone 08457 643 643 (24hrs a day)
- If you depend on electrical equipment that is vital to your health, please let us know
- For your safety switch off all electrical appliances - but leave one light on so that you will know when the electricity comes back on
- In winter try to keep warm. Put on warm clothes and keep windows and doors closed as much as possible
- Keep fridge/freezer doors closed as much as possible to preserve food

What to do when the power comes back on

- Check that all your electrical appliances are working normally
- Make sure no electric heaters are close to curtains or furniture and are a fire risk

Electrical Safety

Voltage

In Northern Ireland, electricity for your home is supplied at a voltage of 230V and a frequency of 50Hz. If you have brought any appliances with you, please check that they are suitable for use here.

Fuses

To select the correct size of fuse you must know the wattage of your appliance. The wattage can usually be found on the nameplate or sticker. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Equipment

TV, Video, DVD, audio and hi-fi, table lamp

Fuse Size

3 AMP

Appliance Rating

Up to 720 watts

Heater, iron, kettle, fridge, toaster, electric fire

13 AMP

Over 720 watts

Warning – if you are in any doubt when wiring plugs or replacing fuses stop what you are doing and get expert advice.

