

METER READINGS EXPLAINED



Your obligations

Your energy bills are based on the amount of electricity or gas you use. As an energy consumer, it is your responsibility to provide safe, convenient and unhindered access to the electricity or gas meter.

Your distributor may not be able to read your meter because of dogs or other animals running loose, locked security gates, if the meter is located inside the premises, or some other obstruction blocks the meter.

Your energy distributor and their authorised representatives need access to your property to:

- read, test, maintain, inspect or alter any meter
- calculate or measure energy supplied or taken
- check the accuracy of metered consumption
- replace meters, control apparatus and other equipment owned by the distributor
- connect or disconnect supply
- examine or inspect an electrical or gas installation
- inspect, make safe, operate, change, maintain, remove, repair or replace any works performed by the distributor
- undertake repairs, testing or maintenance of the supply network
- clear vegetation from power lines and electricity and gas equipment owned by the distributor
- decide the appropriate tariff or charging category for your property, and
- perform services requested by you or your retailer.

If you are on a market contract, you should check the terms and conditions for information about meter reads.

Types of meters

Dial meters

Dial meters are the most common type of meter and can be found in many older houses.



Odometer meters

Similar to a car's odometer. If you have peak and off-peak electricity (measured at different tariff levels), it is likely you will have two odometer meters.

Electronic/digital meters

Digital meters record time of use and allow digital download of information on consumption and usage patterns back to your energy distributor.

Meter identifiers

NMI

A National Metering Identifier or NMI is the unique number on your home or business' electricity connection point. This number will appear on your electricity bill. If you change electricity retailers, they will need your NMI to assist with the transfer of your account.

MIRN

A Meter Installation Reference Number or MIRN is the unique number on your home or business' gas connection point. This number will appear on your gas bill. If you change gas retailers, they will need your MIRN to assist with the transfer of your account.



Denying access to a meter

If the electricity distributor cannot get access to read your meter for three consecutive scheduled readings, your retailer may disconnect your electricity. The retailer can only do this if:

- it has given you the opportunity to find alternative access arrangements suitable to the distributor
- on each occasion access was denied, you received written notification requesting access and advised you may face disconnection if access is not granted
- it used its best endeavours to contact you by phone, mail, fax, email or another approved method, and
- it sent you a written disconnection warning giving five business days notice of the disconnection, and the warning included information and contact details for the Energy Ombudsman Queensland (EOQ).

A gas retailer may also disconnect your supply if you have not provided access to your meter on three consecutive scheduled readings. However:

- they must provide at least two disconnection warnings sent at least one week apart
- the disconnection date must be at least 10 business days after the first disconnection warning is given, and
- the disconnection warning must state you can refer the dispute to the EOQ.

Your retailer's obligations

Your retailer must base your bill on the meter reading provided by the distributor or on a reading method agreed between you and your retailer, such as a customer self-read. Check with your retailer if they will accept other methods.

Retailers must use their best endeavours to ensure that an actual meter reading is obtained at least once every 12 months. If an actual meter reading is not obtained for that billing period, retailers can bill you on an estimated consumption.

If you have received an estimated bill, you can request a new bill based on an actual meter read. Known as a special meter reading, this occurs outside of the time for a scheduled meter read. Your retailer must use their best endeavours to send you a new bill based on actual meter readings, but you may be responsible for additional costs incurred by the retailer for performing the special meter read. Ask your retailer how much a special meter read will cost and if there are any other conditions involved.

When seeking access to your property, distributors and their representatives must comply with all relevant requirements under legislation, carry or wear official identification, and show their identification if requested.

What can I do?

If there is a problem accessing your meter, contact your retailer to discuss options available to you. There are a number of things you can do (however please be aware there may be a charge for these services):

- The estimated scheduled read times are printed on each bill so you can make preparations for the next meter read, such as securing animals.
- Your retailer may allow you to read the meter yourself.
- You can request a special meter read.
- Move the meter box to a more accessible location.
- Install an industry lock where both you and the distributor have a key.



ABOUT EOQ

The Energy Ombudsman Queensland is a free and independent dispute resolution and mediation service for Queensland's energy consumers.

We are committed to providing an effective, high-quality, fair and confidential service for domestic and small business energy consumers who have been unable to resolve a problem with their energy supplier.



Freecall
1800 662 837



www.eoq.com.au



info@eoq.com.au



PO Box 3640
South Brisbane
QLD 4101



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