



budgetenergy

Northern Ireland's **Electricity** Company

Code of Practice

on

Efficient Use of Electricity

CODE OF PRACTICE ON EFFICIENT USE OF ELECTRICITY

Everyone wants to save money on the energy they use. By taking a number of simple energy efficiency steps, you can quickly and easily start reducing your costs as you reduce your energy consumption. This is not only good for the environment but importantly for your pocket.

The Budget Energy Codes of Practice on Energy Efficiency is set up so that you may have easy access to help and advice on how to use energy efficiently, avoid waste and reduce your energy costs.

Customers can receive a copy of the codes of practice free of charge.

ARE YOUR BILLS HIGHER THAN YOU MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED?

If you find your consumption and your charges are higher than you might have expected then there are a number of things you will want to check. By checking the following listed below you will then have more knowledge of what might be happening. Your next step then is to contact us.

How to check on your consumption: Some questions to answer include:

Has your bill been based on an actual reading of your meter?

If your previous bills have been estimated, an actual meter read may mean a larger than expected bill. If meter reads are estimated, they'll be clearly marked with (est) on your bill.

Does the billing period cover a longer period than your previous bills?

You will find the billing period on the front of your bills.

Does the billing period cover the colder winter period?

The time of year can also impact on the amount of electricity you use.

Have you changed the way you use electricity?

Your consumption can increase for lots of reasons, for example fitting new appliances or building an extension to your house.

Next check your charges:

Has there been a price change? We will always inform you 21 days in advance of price changes.

Have any additional charges been added to your account?

After checking all of these and you still think the amount on your bill is incorrect, just call our Customer Service telephone number is **0800 012 11 77**. We are open Monday to Friday from 8am - 8pm and 11am – 4pm on Saturdays.

HELP WITH ENERGY EFFICIENCY

For help and advice on how to use energy efficiently, avoid waste and reduce your energy costs, you can go to our website www.budgetenergy.co.uk.

Our website has a dedicated Energy Saving Advice section where you can find all that you need to know on how you might reduce your energy consumption and costs.

- Budget Energy Customer Service Team – You can also contact our customer service team on **0800 012 11 77**.
- Warm Homes Scheme – You can also contact the Warm Homes Scheme on their website: www.warm-homes.com or by Telephoning 0800 988 0559. The Warm Homes scheme is designed to assist people in Northern Ireland in making their homes warmer and more energy efficient. The Warm Homes Scheme is aimed at people on a wide range of benefits. Those in receipt of qualifying benefits are eligible for assistance towards insulating their home. You may also be eligible for the Warm Homes Scheme plus grant towards conversions or installations of central heating systems.
- Additional schemes can also be found at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/environment-and-greenerliving/energy-wise/energy-saving-grants.htm>.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS

You can reduce your energy costs and carbon footprint by taking the following steps to be more energy-efficient:

COOKERY TIPS

- Only use as much water as you need in the kettle. Do make sure you cover the element if you use an electric kettle.
- When cooking vegetables, use just enough water to cover the food and put a lid on. Simmer instead of boiling; less steam means less need to ventilate the room, cutting your heating costs.
- Always use the right size of pan for your cooking ring.
- Use pans that can divide into sections so you can cook several items at once. Cook big batches of food at once. It's more energy efficient to use all the oven space available – and freeze food you don't need that day.
- Take any shelves you don't use out of the oven & don't keep opening the oven door during cooking.
- Cut food into smaller sections before cooking; it may cook more quickly.
- Make toast in a toaster, not under the grill.

- Use a microwave instead of the oven as much as possible – not just for reheating and defrosting, but for fresh food too. They're quick, easy and economical to use' especially if people in your household eat at different times. Take jacket potatoes for instance. An hour in the oven; 5 minutes in the microwave!

LAUNDRY FOR LESS

- Always try to put a full load into your washing machine or tumble dryer whenever possible.
- Washing clothes at 30°C instead of a higher temperature can use around 40% less electricity.
- Washing powders and detergents work just as effectively at lower temperatures so unless you have very dirty washing, bear this in mind.
- Use economy programmes for small loads or washing which isn't very dirty.
- Front-loading washing machines are usually more efficient.
- If the weather is fine, dry your washing outside.
- If you use a tumble dryer, spin your clothes first. They'll dry more quickly.
- Make sure the filters in the tumble dryer are fluff free.
- Don't turn up the tumble dryer too high or dry clothes for too long. It makes ironing easier.
- Buying a new washing machine or dryer? Look for the energy efficiency rating. The more efficient (A or B), the cheaper to run.

STAY CHILLED

- Don't put your fridge or freezer next to a cooker or in the sun. Make sure air can circulate around the back.
- Load and unload the fridge as quickly as possible. Don't leave the door open for longer than you need to.
- Never put hot food in a fridge or freezer. Let it cool first.
- Defrost your fridge or freezer regularly. Check the manufacturer's instructions for more details. Ice should never be more than a quarter of an inch (6mm) thick around the ice box. Check for gaps in door seals that could let warm air in. Place a piece of paper in the door. If you can easily remove the paper with the door closed, then the door is letting warm air into the fridge. Upright freezers are less efficient than chest freezers. Cool air drops out of an upright when you open the door.

- When buying a new fridge or freezer, look for the Energy Saving Recommended logo. These will be the most energy-efficient appliances on the market. They will save energy and cost much less to run.
- Use a thermometer to make sure you have set the thermostat in your fridge or freezer to the correct temperature. If it's too low your appliance will use more energy, and will not keep your food as effectively.

LIGHTEN YOUR LIGHTING BILL

- Turn off any lights you don't need. But do make sure you have enough lighting on stairs and hallways.
- Keep your lampshades and bulbs clean. They give out less light if they are dirty. Darker lampshades give out less light, so use lighter shades to make the most of the energy.
- Fit lower wattage bulbs wherever possible.
- Spotlights can be more expensive to run than other lighting, so avoid leaving them on for a long time.
- Fluorescent tubes give out more light and are the best choice for kitchens.
- Think about buying fittings designed for low-energy lights.
- Fit timers and automatic sensors to lights, especially outside lighting. This will save you money.
- In most homes, lighting accounts for around 20%–25% of the electricity bill. A substantial amount of the energy needed for lighting could be saved by replacing ordinary lamps with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) – aka “energy saving light bulbs”. They may be more expensive to buy than normal tungsten lamps, but CFLs last up to ten times longer. So, for each one you fit, you could save around £40 over the bulbs lifetime.
- Plus, because they use less than a quarter of the energy of traditional bulbs to create the same amount of light, energy saving light bulbs come in much lower wattages.

GET MORE FROM YOUR DISHWASHER

- If you have a dishwasher, wait until you have a full load before you use it.
- Pre-rinse dishes in cold water instead of hot. Use economy programmes whenever possible

STANDBY FOR MORE SAVINGS

- Your TV, DVD and hi-fi use energy when not in use – up to 90% in standby mode. (In some households, it's the equivalent of leaving a 100W light bulb on all year).

- Generally, only the following appliances need to be powered all the time:
 - Home security systems and sensor lights
 - Gas and oil boilers and heating controls
 - Remote garage door openers
 - Standby reduction devices
- Everything else like your TV can be switched off at the wall. To help reduce your energy use further, buy models with low consumption and switch them off at the wall when not in use. You'll be surprised how much you save!
- Not only should you switch your TV off but also all devices attached to it or your computer for example - modems, speakers, scanners and DVD players can all be left running even when we think we've switched them off.
- A standby reduction device will automatically turn these off when you switch off your TV or computer. All you have to do is plug the TV or computer into the socket allocated on the standby reduction device, and when it's switched to standby – hey presto! – it automatically turns off all the other devices.
- The power switch on many new appliances does not completely switch off all the power. To be absolutely sure, switch it off at the wall or unplug it.

YOUR LABEL IS SHOWING (AND IT SAYS A LOT ABOUT YOU!)

- Before you buy a new appliance, check its energy efficiency. This can vary from model to model and new appliances are getting better all the time.
- Always look for energy labels - these give each appliance an energy efficient rating on a scale from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient). Go for 'A' rated appliances wherever possible – they're better for the environment and cost much less to run. Before you buy a new appliance, check its energy efficiency.
- Some appliances are super-efficient – these are the pinnacle of energy efficiency demonstrating the kind of energy efficiency all the appliances aspire to. These have an A+ or A++ label. At the moment, manufacturers only have to put energy labels on fridges, freezers, fridge freezers, dishwashers, washing machines, electric tumble dryers, electric ovens, air conditioners and light bulbs. But for other appliances you can look in the manufacturers' brochure to check how much energy they use.
- Look out for the Energy Saving Recommended logo as these are the most energy efficient models.

CUT THE FLOW AND REDUCE THE COST OF YOUR SHOWER

- Showers are usually cheaper than baths because they use less water, but there is an exception. If you run a power shower for more than 4–5 minutes it actually uses more water than it would take to fill a bath.

- You can enjoy the feel of a power shower but cut the cost considerably by fitting a 'low flow shower head'. This mixes air with water, to give you the feel of an invigorating shower but reduces the amount of water by up to 70%.

A PROPERLY CONTROLLED HEATING SYSTEM SHOULD HAVE:

- Turn your heating down by 1°C and save up to 10% on your energy bill. Make sure that heating and hot water are only provided when and where they're needed.
- A properly controlled heating system should have:
 - A programmer – to set 'on/off' periods. Some models switch the central heating and hot water on/off at the same time. Others allow hot water and the heating to come on and go off at different times.
 - A room thermostat – to select the required room temperature - switches off your heating when your room gets to the right temperature. Set it between 18°C and 21°C.
 - A cylinder thermostat (if you have a separate hot water tank) controls the temperature of the water in your hot water tank. Turn it down to 60°C for water that's hot enough to kill off bacteria. Any higher and you'll not just waste energy, you'll also increase the risk of scalding.
 - Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRVs). These let you control the temperature of each room separately. They sense the air temperature and switch radiators on and off automatically.

Budget Energy would like to acknowledge The Energy Saving Trust as the source of the majority of these Energy Efficiency Tips.