

Code of Practice on Services for Prepayment Meter Customers

www.firmusenergy.co.uk



This Code of Practice outlines services provided for prepayment meter customer's by firmus energy (Supply) Limited (firmus energy, us, we, our).

firmus energy's vision is to become Northern Ireland's 1st choice energy provider for industrial, commercial and residential customers. We aim to do so by simply putting our customers first.

A prepayment meter allows you to pay for your gas as you use it enabling you to take control of your energy requirements. Prepayment meters can be easily fitted into your home and are a simple, safe and practical way to pay for your energy.

Benefits of pay-as-you-go energy

We want you to be in control of your energy bill. A prepayment meter can help because it allows you to pay for energy as you use it. This allows you to:

- Avoid running up large bills.
- View your remaining credit to manage purchases and your energy budget.
- Top-up your meter at a range of local outlets at your convenience.
- Repay any debt you may owe to your supplier at an agreed and manageable rate.

Things to consider before installing a pay as you go meter

Pay as you go energy may not be suitable for all customers or households. Some issues include:

- Proximity to the nearest available outlet to purchase top-ups.
- The range of outlets to purchase top-ups or replacement cards may be limited depending on your location.
- Limited suitability for customers with medical or other special needs e.g. sight problems, mobility difficulties etc.

Where reasonably practicable and appropriate, firmus energy will work with the Gas Network Operator to ensure that a prepayment meter is installed or repositioned in a location which is accessible for older customers, or customers with a disability. In addition, we can arrange for the provision of special controls or adaptors to enable the customer to operate the meter.

To find out more about the suitability and availability of prepayment meters, as well as the different tariffs available from firmus energy, please visit our website www.firmusenergy.co.uk. Alternatively you can contact our Customer Service Team on 0800 032 4567 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm).

How it works

There are a number of different types of prepayment meter available to customers, each meter works differently and has different functionality. For each meter type there is a reference guide available. This guide contains information on:

- The use and operation of your meter.
- Topping up your meter.
- How to find your local Paypoint outlets to purchase top-ups and replacement top-up cards.
- Emergency credit arrangements and how to activate emergency credit.
- How to obtain useful information from your meter; such as information regarding any arrears being paid off via the meter.

User guides can be obtained free of charge by visiting our website www.firmusenergy.co.uk or by contacting our Customer Service Team on 0800 032 4567 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm). If requested we can also provide prepayment meter information and instructions in a language other than English or in another format such as Braille.

Additional meter information can also be obtained from the help and FAQs section of our website: www.firmusenergy.co.uk

Credit and topping up your prepay meter

You can top-up between £5 and £49 each time. Ensure to keep your receipt each time you top-up in case a query arises when you try to transfer the credit to the meter.

The rate at which you buy your units will vary depending on the tariff you are signed up to. For up to date information on your current tariff or our offers please contact our Customer Service Team on 0800 032 4567 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm). Information on our current pay as you go products is also available on our website at www.firmusenergy.co.uk. There are no additional charges payable for the use of a prepayment meter.

Top-ups can be purchased using your pay as you go card from any PayPoint outlet; many local shops and supermarkets provide this service. A list of PayPoint outlets in your area can be found by using the link below or by contacting our Customer Service Team: <http://www.paypoint.co.uk/paypointlocator>

We will always try to ensure that our customers have reasonable access to facilities required to top-up a prepayment meter prior to its installation.

Please be aware that if you do choose to change your gas supplier at any time, your options for vending may change.

Emergency Credit

If your meter starts to run low, you will be offered Emergency Credit. If you use a blue card, when you have £1 or less credit on your meter £5 of emergency credit can be activated to allow you to continue to use appliances. If you use an orange or white card, you will be offered emergency credit when you have 20 units or less on your meter. It is best to top up before you reach the emergency credit limit to avoid any interruption to your supply.

The emergency credit you use will be recovered the next time you put credit into the meter. Try to only use emergency credit in an emergency, because you need to repay it before you can borrow more.

For more information regarding the emergency credit available on your meter please refer to for the FAQ's section of our website or contact us on the number above for more information. Alternatively, we can also send you a reference guide (free of charge).

Repaying an outstanding balance through your prepay meter

If you have an outstanding balance with your existing supplier which is being paid through your pay as you go meter, firmus energy will take no more than 40 percent of the value of each top-up to recover the debt on the meter until the balance has been paid in full.

If you are experiencing difficulties paying for the energy you use, please tell us as quickly as possible. The sooner you let us know, the sooner we can help.

If you ever need to repay an outstanding debt to us, we will discuss your repayment options and come to an agreed payment arrangement which suits your particular circumstances. There may be a number of different payment methods available to you depending on your circumstances. Our Customer Service Team can advise you on times of lower usage as this may be a good opportunity for you to reduce your debt.

Prepayment meters are beneficial as they allow customers to repay any debt they may owe to the supplier at an agreed and manageable rate. Please be aware that firmus energy may install a prepayment meter without a customer's express agreement but this will only occur as a last resort in the pursuit to recover debt.

You can always access up-to-date information on the amount of your outstanding debt by contacting our Customer Service Team on 0800 032 4567 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm).

Problems with your prepayment meter

If you think your prepayment meter is not correctly recording the amount of energy you are using, or is faulty please do not hesitate to contact our Customer Service Team on 0800 032 4567 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm). Our trained representatives will investigate your query and if necessary liaise with the Network Operator for your area to help resolve your query.

If the error with your meter has been found to be over-registration, the additional costs charged as a result of this error will be refunded to you.

If the error with your meter has been found to be under-registration, the additional costs not charged as a result of this error will be retrieved from the customer.

firmus energy will not surcharge the consumer in terms of gas supplied.

Replacement cards

Should you lose your prepayment card, a replacement can be purchased at various PayPoint outlets detailed on the PayPoint website <http://www.paypoint.co.uk/paypointlocator>. Alternatively you can contact our Customer Service Team on 0800 032 4567 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm). The current charge for a replacement card is £4. firmus energy cannot refund any unused credit attached to a lost prepayment card.

Removal or resetting of a prepayment meter

If you would like information regarding the removal or resetting of your prepayment meter including any necessary conditions or charges attached to the completion of this request please contact our Customer Service Team on the above number.

The removal or resetting of your prepayment meter will take up to 2 weeks to complete from the date we confirm the request with you. We aim to return any credit remaining on the meter within 2 weeks of receiving confirmation of the retained credit amount on the meter.

Meter reading

firmus energy will endeavour to read your prepayment meter annually. Please assist us with access to your property when required. All our personnel carry appropriate identification.

For details and a user guide on how to read your meter and obtain other useful information from your pre pay meter, please contact our Customer Service Team on 0800 032 4567 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm). Information is also available on our website under the 'FAQ's section' at www.firmusenergy.co.uk

Moving house

You should try to avoid topping-up more than you need to if you are preparing to move as you may be required to pay resetting or meter exchange charges before we can refund your credit.

As your pay-as-you-go card is property locked and can only be used for one property, you should leave it at the property when you leave.

When you move into your new address you should always register with your supplier and provide a meter reading as soon as possible. If the new property is not supplied by firmus energy we can arrange a transfer for you on request.

Useful telephone numbers

For advice relating to prepayment meters and for complaints please telephone:

☎ 0800 032 4567

24 hour Northern Ireland Gas Emergency Service:

☎ 0800 002 001

Other useful information and advice is available from the Consumer Council.

The Consumer Council
Floor 3
Seatem House,
28-32 Alfred Street
Belfast
BT2 8EN

Complaints:

Telephone ☎ 0800 121 6022

Email: complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk

Web: www.consumercouncil.org.uk

www.firmusenergy.co.uk

