

Our Consumer Care Policy

Our Consumer Care Policy details our commitment to looking after our customers and to helping you manage your electricity account.

We want you to have a warm and healthy home. If you are in financial hardship or having trouble paying your bills, let us know how we can support you.

About this document

Our Consumer Care Policy contains helpful advice, our contact details, and explains how we will:

- Act to make sure we have a good relationship with you.
- Give you the best chance to afford the electricity you need.
- Help to minimise the harm caused by not having enough electricity or not being able to pay your bill.

It also tells you where you can find extra support you might need and how we can help if your health depends on electricity.

This Consumer Care Policy is one of several documents explaining the relationship between you, the customer, and us, your electricity retailer. The other documents are our contract for electricity supply and our standard terms and conditions. The policy is reviewed at least every two years to ensure it remains compliant with the Electricity Industry Participation Code and continues to meet our customers' needs.

We are here for you

We are proud to be your electricity retailer. We understand that using electricity in your home is very important for the wellbeing of you and your family. As your electricity retailer, it is our job to:

- Supply you with the electricity you need
- Make sure you have every opportunity to choose the best pricing plan to meet your needs.
- Communicate with you clearly and on time.
- Treat you with care and respect.

Our promises

As your electricity retailer, we want to make sure that:

- We understand your situation and are proactive in offering assistance.
- We work with you collaboratively and constructively to solve problems.
- We work with you to resolve payment difficulties and, with your permission, can link you to support agencies or social agencies to assist you.
- We work with you to try to keep your electricity connected if you are having payment difficulties.

If you use electricity from us, we will communicate with you clearly about your rights and the choices you can make, even if you have not signed up with us yet.

We view the disconnection of electricity for non-payment of bills as a last resort. We will work with you to try and keep your electricity connected and avoid building up debt.

We might not always get it right, but we are committed to learning continually from our experiences to improve the support we offer you.

What you can expect from us

We'll help you by making it as easy as possible to pay for the electricity you use.

We offer standard terms and conditions to all our customers. You agree to these when you become a customer and consume electricity from us. All our contracts meet the Electricity Authority's good contracting principles and minimum terms and conditions. These terms and conditions are updated from time to time. You can read the latest version on our website www.blackboxpower.co.nz/terms

You also have access to complaint resolution through the Utilities Disputes process and support under the Electricity Authority's 'Consumer Care Guidelines'. As a responsible electricity retailer, we work within these guidelines, and we are always looking for ways to improve our service to you. You can find the Consumer Care Guidelines on the Authority's website www.ea.govt.nz/consumer-care

What we expect from you

As an electricity customer, you have a set of rights and responsibilities. We ask that you pay for the electricity you use, reply to messages we send you, so we can know more about your situation and provide additional help if required. We ask you to work with us positively, the more we work together the more we can help you.

If you are in financial hardship or having trouble paying your bills, let us know how we can help you. Even if you have had problems with your electricity retailer in the past, still contact us when required so we can help you.

Commitment to inclusion

We are an inclusive electricity provider, and we work to make sure that all our customers have access to the support we offer regardless of language, ethnicity, educational achievement, culture, gender, physical and intellectual ability, age, health, income, and wealth.

Ways we can help you

Signing up as a customer

We want to have you as a customer, and we will help you through the sign-up process.

Becoming a customer means agreeing to us supplying you with electricity, agreeing to our terms and conditions, and choosing the right electricity plan for you. Before you become a customer, we will ask you questions about yourself and your situation. If we think there is another electricity retailer or a better option for you, we will tell you about them.

We conduct credit checks but will consider this along with all other information you provide to us. In cases of poor credit history, we will provide advice on actions you may take to get electricity from us or another retailer. If we do not offer you a contract, we will tell you why. If you are having a hard time finding an electricity retailer, we can refer you to a financial mentor or advise you on what you can do.

Choosing the right electricity plan

We offer a range of electricity plans designed to make it cheaper for you, suit different households, or provide extra services you might like to receive. These plans include a daily fixed charge and a usage charge based on the amount of electricity you use. We can also offer a SmoothPay option, which averages your electricity bills. This means that you pay regular amounts spread out over a year. To help you decide which electricity plan might suit you best, we can talk about how you usually use energy in your household and your past electricity consumption. You can request access to your electricity consumption information under the [Electricity Industry Participation Code](#) to help you better understand your usage and choose the right plan.

Using electricity smartly

We want to help you keep your home healthy and warm. We can offer you advice on how to use your electricity in a way that saves you money. There may be simple changes you can make to your home and the way you use electricity to keep it warm in winter and cool in summer, and keep your energy costs down.

Communicating clearly

We value our relationship with you. We want to provide you with understandable, timely, clear, and accessible communications. You can choose the best option for how and when we communicate with you based on your needs.

If you need someone to act on your behalf

You can ask us to communicate with you using an alternative contact person if you prefer. An alternative contact could be a family member, friend, support person, or community worker. Ask this person first. Then, if they agree, you can tell us their name and contact details by emailing customer.care@blackboxpower.co.nz. Once this is settled, we will work with your alternate contact to make sure that you understand what is happening with your electricity bills and what payments you need to make.

Speaking your language

If you would like to speak to us in a language other than English, we will try to help. If we do not speak your language, you have other options. You can use an alternative contact to talk with us. Another option is to use a different communications method that suits you.

Making it easier to pay

We provide a number of ways you can pay your bills with us. For more information visit www.blackboxpower.co.nz/payment

Viewing your account

My Account is the easiest way to manage your electricity account.

To see your account balance, and information on how to make payments, visit www.blackboxpower.co.nz/myaccount. You can view your past electricity usage and current user plan on your bill each month.

Making a payment plan

You can pay your bills weekly, fortnightly, monthly or on the due date. If you are finding it hard to pay your electricity bill, our team are here to help. We can help you set up a SmoothPay payment plan which works best with your schedule. This way, you know when your electricity bills will be paid and will not be subject to late fees or disconnections. If you have an outstanding balance on your account, we can help you set up a repayment plan that suits you. We will not change your payment plan without telling you first. We will not disconnect your electricity if you are on a payment plan and making the agreed payments.

Linking you with financial mentoring and support organisations.

We can help you if your family or household needs extra support. We have relationships with different people and organisations in the community that offer financial mentoring and money advice. They can help you work out how best to pay your bills. If you agree, we will work with you to connect you with appropriate support services as soon as possible, and no later than 5 business days after we identify that support may be helpful. You will receive help without your electricity supply disconnected if you keep us updated about the referral status. We will work with you and your support organisation in partnership, making sure we use agreed ways of communicating with each other.

Our fees, bonds, and conditional discounts

Fees: We occasionally charge additional fees. They are only charged when necessary and when we have provided extra services to you. To view a list of our fees, visit www.blackboxpower.co.nz/fees

Bonds: We do not require residential customers to provide a bond as a condition of supply. If this changes, we will clearly explain when a bond may be required and how it will be refunded.

Conditional discounts: We do not have conditional discounts. If this changes, we will clearly outline the terms, when they apply, and when they may be lost.

Medically Dependent Customers

The health and wellbeing of our customers is very important to us. If you think you, or someone in your household, is medically dependent on electricity, let us know as soon as possible by calling **0800 269 769**. You will need also fill in our Medically Dependent form here www.blackboxpower.co.nz/customer-hub/my-black-box-power-plan/vulnerable-and-medically-dependent-customers/

We do not disconnect the electricity supply of medically dependent customers for non-payment. If anyone in your household is medically dependent on electricity, please let us know and keep this information up to date. However, despite our best efforts, the electricity supply may be cut because of extreme weather, accidents, or technical problems. In case this happens, you should have an emergency response plan. An emergency response plan, for example, could be having a fully charged battery available, going to a friend or family member's house with electricity or, calling an ambulance to be taken to hospital. For more information on preparing an emergency response plan for your household visit www.eranz.org.nz/medically-dependant

Your electricity supply

The electricity you use relies on many businesses to generate and deliver it to your home. Each electricity bill you receive from us goes towards paying these businesses for generation, transmission, distribution, and metering, as well as what we do as your retailer. Normally, we will take care of everything for you. However, from time to time you may receive a notice directly from your electricity network or local lines company about planned electricity outages in your area. This is when they turn off the electricity to your home for a set period of time for maintenance work or to upgrade the wires. Sometimes things go wrong and there is no power in your home. We can help you work out what the problem is and who is best to fix it. If you have lost power to your home, contact us on **0800 269 769**

Disconnection for non-payment & reconnection

We work hard to make electricity as affordable for our customers as possible. We will strive to keep you connected and view disconnections as a last resort. If you need extra help paying your electricity bill, please contact us. Our Customer Care Team are here to help.

There are many ways we can help you pay for the electricity you use. This includes checking to make sure your electricity plan is right for you, providing power saving tips, offering multiple ways to pay your bill and payment arrangements if needed. Even if you have had payment issues with us in the past, contact us so we can make a new repayment plan that works best for you and your current circumstances. Alternatively, we can refer you to support services and financial mentoring in your community. If you do not pay a bill on its due date, we will attempt to communicate with you directly and/or through the alternative contact you have chosen. Please engage with us so we can support you.

What communication you can expect from us

We will attempt to contact you a number of times about an unpaid bill. Our aim is to let you know about your rights and obligations. We will attempt to communicate with you using more than one method and use your alternative contact if you have provided us with one. If we contact you, please respond so we can make payment arrangements and avoid disconnection.

You can expect the following communication from us regarding an unpaid bill:

1. An invoice that tells you the amount due and the due date.
2. A reminder notice three days later if the due date is missed.
3. Multiple follow-up attempts over more than a week.
4. A further notice that will tell you the date on which we will disconnect your electricity.
5. A final notice of disconnection.

Disconnecting your electricity supply for non-payment

If you do not respond to communication we send and your electricity bills remain unpaid, we may disconnect your electricity supply. Disconnections may not happen in person, so a representative from our company may visit your property. You must contact us in response to our reminder notices or disconnection notices to make sure your electricity remains connected.

If you have told us that you or a member of your household is medically dependent on electricity, we will not disconnect your electricity supply for non-payment. We will not disconnect your electricity at night, immediately before or during a weekend or public holiday, during severe weather events or during a civil emergency. If your electricity supply is disconnected, you will have to pay a reconnection fee to cover the cost of reconnecting your electricity. Our schedule of fees can be found here www.blackboxpower.co.nz/fees. You will not pay a reconnection fee if you are disconnected in error.

Making a complaint

You can contact us at any time to talk about your situation, ask questions about your bill, or make a complaint. If you have any concerns about the service you have received from us or if we haven't lived up to our commitments in this document, let us know first. We are committed to improving our service and customers experience with us. For any feedback or if you would like to make a complaint, you can email resolutions@blackboxpower.co.nz

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can contact Utilities Disputes. This service is independent and free of charge.

Utilities Disputes
0800 22 33 40
info@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz
utilitiesdisputes.co.nz

Monitoring our performance

We are proud to uphold high standards of service and performance. As an electricity retailer, we are regulated and supervised by the Government and independent organisations. This is done through several organisations, including the Electricity Authority, the Commerce Commission, and Utilities Disputes. To demonstrate our commitment to serving our customers, we give information to the Electricity Authority as required under the Consumer Care Guidelines. We will make sure we work within guidelines agreed between retailers and support or health agencies within six months of their publication on the Electricity Authority's website.

Organisations that can help you

Billy

Billy is a website that helps you check and compare electricity plans from different power companies.

Could you save money on another plan or with another power company?

Compare plans at the free and independent site.

billy.govt.nz

Money Talks

MoneyTalks is a free and confidential financial helpline that can connect you with financial mentors and other community services.

www.moneytalks.co.nz

0800 345 123

Citizens Advice Bureau

A nationwide network providing free, confidential, independent information on your rights and how to access the services you need.

www.cab.org.nz

0800 367 222

Work and Income

Work and Income is here to help you financially if you're on a low income or not working.

www.workandincome.govt.nz

0800 559 009

Community Energy Network

Energy efficiency and healthy homes community-based specialists.

www.communityenergy.org.nz

Utilities Disputes

In the unlikely event that we are unable to resolve your complaint; you can contact Utilities Disputes at udl.co.nz via live chat or call **0800 22 33 40**. Utilities Disputes is a free and independent service that sorts complaints about utilities providers.

Contact us

For queries related to the Consumer Care Policy or our compliance with the Consumer Care Obligations, please contact us at:

Email: customer.care@blackboxpower.co.nz

Phone: **0800 269 769**