

# Code of Practice on Services for Prepayment Meter Customers

[www.firmusenergy.co.uk](http://www.firmusenergy.co.uk)

**firmus**  
energy  
transitioning to *net zero* carbon



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

firmus energy's vision is to become Northern Ireland's energy supplier of choice in a net zero carbon future. 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. It is not possible to purchase a top up online.
- 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 suitable for customers with specific accessibility needs. 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](http://www.firmusenergy.co.uk). Alternatively, you can contact our Customer Service Team on 0330 024 9000 (Monday to Thursday, 9am – 5pm; Friday 9am – 3.30pm).

## 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.

You can find more information on using your prepayment meter by visiting our website [www.firmusenergy.co.uk](http://www.firmusenergy.co.uk) and clicking on the Help & Advice section, or by contacting our Customer Service Team on 0330 024 9000 (Monday to Thursday, 9am – 5pm; Friday 9am – 3.30pm). We can send you information on how to use your prepayment meter free of charge and if requested, provide this information and instructions in a language other than English or in another format such as Braille.

## Credit and topping up your prepay meter

You can top-up between £5 and £75 and must transfer the top up to the meter before you can add additional credit to the card. 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. A top up is valid on your payment card for a period of 6 months after which it will expire and not transfer to your meter. If you have a card with expired credit, please contact our customer service team for further assistance on a refund.

The rate at which you buy your units will vary depending on the tariff you are signed up to. There are no additional charges for purchasing a gas top up nor any standing charges. For up-to-date information on your current tariff or our offers please contact our Customer Service Team on 0330 024 9000 (Monday to Thursday, 9am – 5pm; Friday 9am – 3.30pm). Details of our current pay as you go tariff rates are also available on our website at [www.firmusenergy.co.uk](http://www.firmusenergy.co.uk), click on the Tariffs section.

Top-ups can be purchased from any PayPoint outlet using your pay as you go card; 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: [www.paypoint.co.uk/paypointlocator](http://www.paypoint.co.uk/paypointlocator)

If you are having difficulty transferring the credit from the top up card to the meter you can try cleaning the chip on the card with an eraser or dry cloth before inserting into the card slot. If your meter is displaying an error code, further guidance is available in the Help & Advice/Top Up Meter section of our website.

We can refund any credit that is on your card and will not transfer to your meter, however, we will require the card to be returned to us so we can read the information on the chip. If the card is returned to us, we cannot be responsible for any cards that are lost in the postal system and would advise customers to use recorded post.

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 your gas supply. 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 Help & Advice 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).



## **Payment difficulties and repaying debt through a prepay meter**

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 have a credit meter, we may be able to install a prepay meter for no additional charge.

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. We will also take into consideration the time of year and if repayment amounts need reduced during the winter period. 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. There may be a number of different payment methods available to you depending on your circumstances, including the option to repay debt through a prepay meter.

If you have an outstanding balance 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.

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. Please note that there may be a charge to apply and remove a debt recovery tariff from a prepayment meter. If a meter exchange is required, a further cost may also apply. Please see our published charges detailed on our website at the following link for further information: <https://www.firmusenergy.co.uk/publications/category/supply-code-of-practice/specific/debt-recovery-charges>

You can always access up-to-date information on the amount of your outstanding debt by contacting our Customer Service Team on 0330 024 9000 (Monday to Thursday, 9am – 5pm; Friday 9am – 3.30pm).

## **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 0330 024 9000 (Monday to Thursday, 9am – 5pm; Friday 9am – 3.30pm). 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.

## **Replacement cards**

Should you lose your orange or white prepayment card; a replacement can be purchased at various PayPoint outlets detailed on the PayPoint website [www.paypoint.co.uk/paypointlocator](http://www.paypoint.co.uk/paypointlocator). The current charge for a replacement card is £4.

If you lose your blue prepayment card, we can arrange for a new one to be sent to you or advise where you can collect a replacement. These cards cannot be purchased at PayPoint outlets. The cost of a replacement card is £6.13.

firmus energy cannot refund any unused credit attached to a lost prepayment card. You can contact our Customer Service Team on 0330 024 9000 (Monday to Thursday, 9am – 5pm; Friday 9am – 3.30pm) for advice on obtaining a replacement 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. Please note any applicable charges for the removal or resetting of the meter may include costs of an engineer visit to your property and will require payment in advance of the works being carried out on your behalf.

## **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 prepay meter, please contact our Customer Service Team on 0330 024 9000 (Monday to Thursday, 9am – 5pm; Friday 9am – 3.30pm). Information is also available on our website under the 'Help & Advice' section at [www.firmusenergy.co.uk](http://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:

☎ 0330 024 9000

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: [contact@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:contact@consumercouncil.org.uk)

Web: [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk)

[www.firmusenergy.co.uk](http://www.firmusenergy.co.uk)

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