

RESIDENTIAL CONSUMER CARE POLICY

We're here for you

Nova is all about providing great service and making things easy. So, we put a lot of our energy into treating people right, keeping things straightforward and being genuine.

As your retailer, we're here to help you. We'll listen and respond to your needs and concerns, be courteous, friendly, and professional, respect your privacy and use plain language in all our communications with you.

Our Consumer Care Policy

As an electricity retailer we understand the essential role electricity plays in all our customers' lives. We are committed to ensuring you stay safe and connected.

As an electricity customer, you have rights and responsibilities with us. You can read our General Terms and Conditions [here](#), along with any other Special Terms and conditions that may apply to you.

This Consumer Care Policy sets out our service promises to you. It is not a legally binding document, but one which guides how we operate.

Our Consumer Care Policy is aligned to The Electricity Authority's Consumer Care Guidelines [here](#).

Our service promises

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

- Work with you collaboratively and constructively to solve problems
- Understand your situation and are proactive in offering assistance to meet your needs
- Communicate with you in a timely and clear way
- Make sure you have every opportunity to choose the best pricing plan to meet your needs
- Make sure all our customers have access to support regardless of language, ethnicity, educational achievement, culture, gender, physical and intellectual ability, age, health, income, and wealth
- Work with you to resolve payment difficulties and, with your permission, can link you to one or more support agencies or social agencies to assist you
- Work with you to try to keep your electricity connected if you are having payment difficulties

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

We offer all our consumers a variety of advice and support, ranging from helping with decisions on the best pricing plans for their consumption and connection type through to payment plans.

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

Your personal information

In providing you with electricity and related services, we need some information from you. We will ensure this information is stored securely and only used for its intended purpose.

We ask that you ensure your details are correct and let us know if anything changes.

You can find out more about how we manage your personal information in our [General Terms and Conditions](#) and our [Privacy Policy](#) on our website.

Joining Nova

Our current electricity plans and payment options are available online, or you can contact us to go through which plan, and payment option meet your needs.

Before you become a customer, we may ask you questions about yourself and your situation. We will also get your permission to do a credit check and consider this along with all other information provided.

If we do not accept you as a customer, 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 give you advice on what you can do.

If you would like a place to check energy prices, you can go to the [Powerswitch website](#).

Choosing the right electricity plan

We offer a range of electricity plans designed to suit different households, usage levels and to provide extra services you might like to receive.

To help you decide which electricity plan might suit you best, you should tell us about how you usually use energy in your household and your past electricity consumption.

All our plans include a daily fixed charge and variable electricity usage charge(s), which are based on your meter type and your network's pricing category. Together these charges show how many days you have been billed and the amount of electricity you have used. Our bills also show a separate charge for the Electricity Levy.

We offer weekly, fortnightly, or monthly payment options, subject to eligibility criteria. There's also a Smoothpay option, which averages out your bills, allowing you to pay equal amounts spread over the year.

Self-service – the Nova Hub

You can manage your account anytime via our self-service platform, the Nova Hub.

The Nova Hub is available on our [website](#). It lets you keep an eye on your usage, view your past bills, make payments, set up a direct debit, provide meter readings and update your communication details.

The Nova Hub can also help you make decisions about whether you are on the right electricity plan and get energy saving tips.

Alternate contacts and Authorised persons

You can ask us to communicate with you using an alternative contact or authorised person. They could be a family member, friend, support person, or community worker.

Before you do so, make sure you ask this person first. Then, if they agree, let us know their name and contact details and whether:

- They are our first point of contact for your account (e.g., an Authorised Contact); or
- We should only contact them when we can't get hold of you (e.g., an Alternate Contact).

Speaking your language

If we do not speak your language, you have other options.

You can use an alternative contact or authorised person to talk with us instead.

Another option is to use a different communication method that suits you. For example, you could receive information from us in writing.

If you have payment difficulties

We will get in touch with you through your preferred contact methods when we see your bill is overdue. It's important we work together to help you manage your payments, particularly if you are having difficulties.

Here are some ways we can help:

- We can check to see you are on the best plan for your usage
- You could change to our weekly or fortnightly billing service to align bills with your pay and make budgeting easier, if you meet our eligibility criteria
- We could check to see if you are eligible for Smoothpay, which allows you can pay the same amount in weekly, fortnightly, or monthly instalments, spread over the year
- Where your electricity consumption increases significantly, we will send you a note to bring this to your attention
- We can look at setting up a special payment plan arrangement to suit you. We will then check your payments to make sure your plan is working well, or contact you if we think there is a better way for you to meet your payments
- We can put you in touch with social agencies and free budgeting advice agencies.

Linking you with financial mentoring and support organisations

If you are struggling to keep up with your bill payments, with your consent, we can connect you with support agencies, who will help you with things like paying your bill.

Once contact is made, we will give you some time to talk to these agencies and receive help without disconnecting your electricity supply.

We will work with you and your support organisation as a partnership, making sure we all use agreed ways of communicating with each other.

The following organisations may also be able to help with financial assistance and/or free budgeting advice:

Social agencies: You may be able to get extra assistance from Work and Income, the Citizens Advice Bureau, your local Mayoral Fund or Age Concern. The Work and Income number is 0800 559 009 or, you can visit online at www.workandincome.govt.nz.

Budgeting advice: If you are finding it difficult to pay your bill you can seek free financial advice from Money Talks on 0800 345 123, SMS on 4029, or email help@moneytalks.co.nz.

Protecting the health of Medically Dependent Consumers

The health and wellbeing of our customers is very important to us.

If you or someone living with you (even for a short period) depend on electricity to run critical medical support equipment, then you are considered a “Medically Dependent Consumer” (“MDC”). Examples of critical medical equipment include ventilators, renal dialysis machines, oxygen concentrators, and ventricular assistance devices, as well as other non-medical equipment which may be needed for critical medical support (e.g., a microwave oven to heat fluids for renal dialysis).

We will ask you if this applies when you first join us and will remind you to tell us annually. If your situation changes, or if you think that you or someone in your household, may be, or become medically dependent on electricity, you should get in touch with us to let us know as soon as possible.

Once you have let us know that you or someone living at your property is medically dependant, with your permission, we will collect and record all relevant information from you and register this status on your account. We will also share this information with certain third-party providers, for example, your network and metering companies and our field services staff, so they are aware if they are working at your property (e.g., checking or upgrading your electricity meter).

The medical dependency will need to be verified by a qualified Health Practitioner (e.g., your doctor, District Health Board, Private Hospital) at your own cost unless we ask for a re-verification. We may ask you to get your doctor to return a completed form that confirms your Notice of Potential MDC status, or potential MDC still applies.

If we do not receive the required verification from you, or your Health Practitioner by the date we’ve outlined, we may remove you from our Medical Dependency Register and change your account status accordingly.

We do not disconnect the electricity supply of medically dependent consumers for non-payment.

However, despite our best efforts, occasionally the electricity supply is cut because of extreme weather, accidents, or technical problems. In case this happens, you should have an emergency response plan.

An emergency response plan could include having a fully charged battery available, going to a friend or family member’s house with electricity or, in serious cases, calling an ambulance to be taken to hospital.

For more information on preparing an emergency response plan for your household go to: www.eranz.org.nz/medically-dependant.

Disconnection for non-payment of your electricity bill

Disconnection for non-payment is a last resort.

We may disconnect your electricity supply if you fail to pay your bill in full and by the due date, after being reminded to do so, or if you default on the payment plan we have agreed with you.

Before disconnecting your electricity supply we will make multiple attempts to communicate with you, using more than one method and by contacting your alternative contact or authorised person if you have provided us with one. We may also contact you at different times of the day.

Except in the case of requested, agreed, emergency or safety-related disconnections, we will:

- give you at least 10 business days' notice warning of disconnection
- provide a final warning no less than 24 hours before disconnecting you. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure you receive the final warning. (Note in the event we are unable to disconnect your energy supply within the timeframe we've given, we'll send you a further final disconnection warning).

The final disconnection warning we send you will include:

- the address of the premises to be disconnected
- the timeframe for disconnecting your electricity supply
- how you may be able to avoid disconnection of your electricity supply (if applicable)
- the cost of reconnection (including details of any charges you will need to pay in addition to paying your unpaid invoice)
- our payment options
- information and contacts details of Work and Income and other budget advice, support and social agencies that may be able to help
- information about our Medically Dependant Consumer application processes
- our complaints resolution process and the contact details of Utilities Disputes

We will only disconnect your electricity supply on a business day, excluding Fridays and the day prior to a public holiday.

If no one has signed up for electricity at a residential site, we may disconnect the electricity at any stage. However, we will send sign up and disconnection information to the address before we do this.

Reconnecting your electricity supply

You need to contact us if you want to reconnect your electricity supply if it has been disconnected. We'll arrange to reconnect you, provided you meet our criteria and any applicable charges, including:

- the total amount outstanding on your account
- any applicable disconnection fees and any applicable additional fees incurred during the disconnection process
- any applicable reconnection fees
- any charges that have accumulated since disconnection, including fixed daily and metering charges
- any applicable bond, or increased bond, as determined by us

Our schedule of service fees is available on our website [here](#).

Also, we may require you to:

- be at your property at the time we reconnect; or
- make sure we can get safe on-going access to your property (to our satisfaction) so our staff and contractors can undertake the reconnection activity; and
- make sure you switch off all appliances at the time we reconnect to ensure they are not damaged by any power surges.

Fees and bonds

As a customer you are responsible for paying all **charges** and **fees** from the date your property gets switched to us, or from when you first used electricity or services we provide.

Your electricity plan's pricing charges are included in the plan information we send you at the time you join us. These charges may be updated from time to time if you change plans or if we notify you of changes permitted under our General Terms and Conditions or your Special Terms.

Our schedule of service fees is available on our website [here](#).

This schedule includes charges for additional services and bonds.

If you ask us or require an additional service, we will tell you the amount or provide an estimate so you can decide if you want to go ahead with it.

In certain instances, we may ask for a bond. If we do, we'll let you know why and whether we require you to pay it immediately or on your next bill.

If you have paid a bond and you subsequently meet all payment obligations for at least 12 months, we will repay your bond. If you switch to another electricity provider during this period we will give back your bond, less any outstanding amounts you owe us (if any).

Feedback and complaints

You can contact us at any time to talk about your situation, ask questions about your bill, ask questions about this policy, or to give us feedback.

If you have any concerns about the service you have received from us or if we haven't lived up to our commitments to you, please let us know.

We have a free comprehensive complaint process in place to ensure such issues or concerns are thoroughly reviewed.

You can raise a complaint by contacting our Customer Care Team on 0800 668 236, by emailing complaints@novaenergy.co.nz, or by writing to:

Manager Retail Services
Nova Energy
PO Box 404
Whakatane 3158

We will try to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible and will acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days of receiving it.

If we have not resolved your complaint, we will respond to you within 7 working days to let you know the steps that have been taken or are/will be taken to try and resolve your complaint. We will attempt to resolve your complaint within 20 working days after receiving it.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, or at any point, you can contact Utilities Disputes for free independent advice on 0800 22 33 40 or by sending an email to info@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz.