

REF: 510 EXCESSIVELY HIGH ELECTRICITY BILLS

The most common causes of excessively high electricity bills include: inadequate levels of home insulation and/or no hot water tank jacket; leaving the electric immersion heater on constantly and/or the hot water thermostat set too high; inefficient use of central heating systems and controls; old, expensive to run heating systems. e.g. warm air, electric fires, ceiling or under floor heating.

When a consumer receives a bill, which is unusually high, a series of checks can be made to help establish the cause of the high bill.

Is this your electricity bill?

Check name, address, reference number and period covered are all correct.

Is this an estimated bill?

Check under the column marked "Present Reading" the letter 'E' will appear after the reading. If 'E' is not written you will know the reading has been obtained from an actual Meter Reading taken by the electricity supplier.

Reading your Meter if an estimated reading:

Check the estimated present reading on the bill against the actual meter reading. If the estimated reading is well out, work out how much the bill should be by multiplying the correct units used by cost per unit. If this amount is much less than the bill, fill in the correct meter reading on the back of the bill and send it back immediately or phone the electricity supplier and give the correct present reading.

If the bill is not estimated

Check the **Present Reading** on the bill with what the meter reading is now. Remember to allow for units used since the date of the present meter reading. If you then feel the meter reading on the bill was wrong contact the electricity supplier with your query. There will be a telephone number on the bill.

Note - If your electricity meter is in a cupboard outside your flat and you do not have a key, contact your landlord to request one. If you are an Aberdeen City Council tenant contact Housing Repairs 624524 to request a key for the meter cupboard.

If the bill is correct, is the electricity used excessive?

Divide the units used by the relevant period (usually 13 weeks) to find out the units used each week.

Write down all the electric appliances used and the times they were used each week, then, using SCARF's Fact Sheet on Running Costs as a guide, estimate the units used weekly remembering to take into account any unusual times when more heating was required, e.g. when someone was ill.

Check the electric heating system has been working at the correct times. Sometimes the time switches can be at fault. This may cause high bills if heaters are used during expensive periods. It is also possible for heaters to be wired wrongly.

Mission Statement

SCARF aims to work through partnership to promote sustainable use of energy, eradicate fuel poverty and create sustainable employment and training opportunities.

Core Objectives

- + To provide free impartial and accessible energy efficiency advice and information services to help save energy, save cash and help save the environment.
- + To encourage investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy measures and grant take up for property improvements to achieve affordable warmth.
- + To create sustainable employment and training opportunities.

SCARF Provides

One Stop Energy Advice Shop offers free impartial advice and information:

- + Energy efficiency in the home, business and the community
- + Renewable energy in the home, business and the community
- + Grants for loft and cavity wall insulation
- + Grants for draughtproofing
- + Grants for central heating
- + Grants for renewable energy installations
- + Paying for fuel and fuel suppliers
- + Choice and operation of heating and hot water systems

SCARF also offers:

- + Home visits
- + Home energy checks
- + Presentations and informal training
- + NVQ and City & Guilds Qualifications

Check the electric water heating has been working at the correct times. Sometimes the water heating control can be incorrectly set, so that water is heating up during expensive periods.

Does the hot water overheat or boil?

There may be a fault with the hot water-cylinder thermostat. Check the thermostat as follows:

- Switch on the water-heater when the water is cold.
- Switch off all other appliances if possible and look at the meter. (Note how the wheel is whizzing round when water heater is switched on). If you have a digital meter then a red light flashes intermittently. The frequency it flashes will increase.
- Leave the water heater on until water is fully heated.
- Switch off all other appliances and have another look at the meter.
- If the wheel is still whizzing round or the red light is flashing quickly there is a fault in the thermostat. Contact your landlord, local housing repairs office, or consult an electrical contractor.
- You may hear the water boiling up if the thermostat is faulty.
- If possible measure the temperature of the hot water. If higher than 60°C the thermostat is set too high or faulty.

If there is nothing wrong with the thermostat and the bills are still suspiciously high, contact your landlord to arrange to get the wiring checked. If after all the above checks the high bill is still a mystery, there may be an electric fault, or the meter may be faulty. Meters very rarely register incorrectly.

Contact SCARF on 0800 512012 for Faulty Electric Meters Fact Sheet.

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