

## Fact sheet

### Meter Accuracy & Billing Disputes

The measurements from the readings of gas and electricity meters are used to calculate the amount of energy supplied to your home and will appear on your energy bill sent to you by your supplier(s).

Any gas or electricity meter used for the purpose of billing, whether by a licensed energy supplier or a landlord, must be approved by Ofgem, or an equivalent EC Member State body. Most domestic and smaller industrial/commercial metering applications are covered by this requirement. Only meter types that operate to defined accuracy and performance requirements will be approved. More guidance on meter approvals is available in Meter Approval, Certification and Stamping fact sheet.  
[http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/temp/ofgem/cache/cmsattach/5815\\_Factsheet\\_MeterApproval.pdf](http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/temp/ofgem/cache/cmsattach/5815_Factsheet_MeterApproval.pdf)

Suppliers are required to read and inspect your meter(s) at least every two years – although some suppliers may visit more frequently. Bills, between supplier meter readings, are issued using estimates based mainly on past consumption.

As there can be a lengthy period between supplier readings it is important that you ensure that the estimated reading is close to what the meter has recorded. You can do this by recording the reading on the meter yourself and comparing this reading against the estimate - soon after you receive your bill. If a large difference is found contact your supplier who should make adjustments to your account.

There may be many reasons for a change in consumption. These could include:

- Particularly colder or milder seasonal weather causing you to use more or less energy;
- A change in circumstances may cause a change in energy consumed - i.e. illness, new baby, working at home, etc...;
- Faulty appliance – using more energy than it should because it is not operating correctly; and
- Changing types of appliance – i.e. moving from gas to electricity or vice versa.

There is also a chance that your meter may have developed a fault. If you think your meter may not be registering accurately you should contact your supplier. Your supplier is required to investigate your complaint and make best efforts to resolve the problem. You may also want to consider contacting your local energywatch office.

If necessary, as a final option when all others routes to settle the problem/dispute have failed, the supplier will make arrangements for the accuracy of the meter to be verified by a meter examiner appointed by Ofgem, under Schedule 7 Electricity Act 1989 or Section 17 Gas Act 1986.

The process of testing a meter varies for gas and electricity meters.

### Gas Meter Testing.

It is impractical to test a gas meter for accuracy on site so your meter must be removed, and exchanged for another. This is then securely packaged and sent to a meter examiner appointed by Ofgem at SGS (UK) Ltd. You should take note of the meter details including the serial number and reading at the time of removal.

At the laboratory your gas meter will undergo a number of tests by the meter examiner to check the performance of the meter and whether any fault is present that could affect its accuracy.

After all the tests have been completed the meter examiner will analyse the results and issue a certificate detailing his findings.

If the meter was found to be within prescribed limits (nominally  $\pm 2\%$ ) it is within prescribed limits and a certificate will be issued stating that the meter was accurate.

If the meter was found to be outside prescribed limits, a certificate will be issued stating that the meter was erroneous with the error stated.

If the meter was found to have a fault causing the readings to be unreliable this would be stated on the certificate along with a description of the fault.

Copies of the certificate will be sent to you, your gas supplier and the owner of the meter.

### Electricity Meter Testing.

Unlike gas meters, electricity meters can be tested on-site. Your electricity supplier will carry out a preliminary accuracy check and if necessary arrange for one of their representatives to discuss any specific concerns. If concerns over the meter persist your supplier and/or local Energy Watch Office can facilitate a request for an Ofgem appointed examiner to review the facts surrounding the dispute and to visit the property to carry out tests on the meter and the meter installation. The meter examiner will talk to the consumer, check the meter for accuracy and whether it was installed correctly.

Depending on the results obtained, the meter examiner may take the meter away for further testing to Ofgem's appointed laboratory. Where the meter needs to be removed, a replacement will be fitted.

Following this, the meter examiner will analyse the results and issue a Determination. This will detail his findings, including whether the meter was within or outside prescribed limits ( $+2.5\%$  and  $-3.5\%$ ) or installed correctly along with other applicable information.

Copies of the Determination will be sent to you, your electricity supplier and the owner of the meter.

### After the Test.

Depending on the findings of the examiner, stated on the certificate or Determination, the supplier will take forward measures to conclude the issue. This may include a plan

to either compensate the consumer for over-billing or prepare a payment plan for the consumer where under-billing has occurred.

#### Meter Testing Charges.

Whilst, at the present time, Ofgem makes no charge for meter testing (irrespective of the outcome) in cases where the meter is found to be accurate, suppliers may make a charge to the customer for the costs they have incurred in visiting the premise and, where necessary, replacing the meter. If the meter is found to be inaccurate or too defective to test, no charge to the customer will be made and a compensation package should be offered.

#### **How to get a lower bill / Tips on ensuring you receive an accurate bill:**

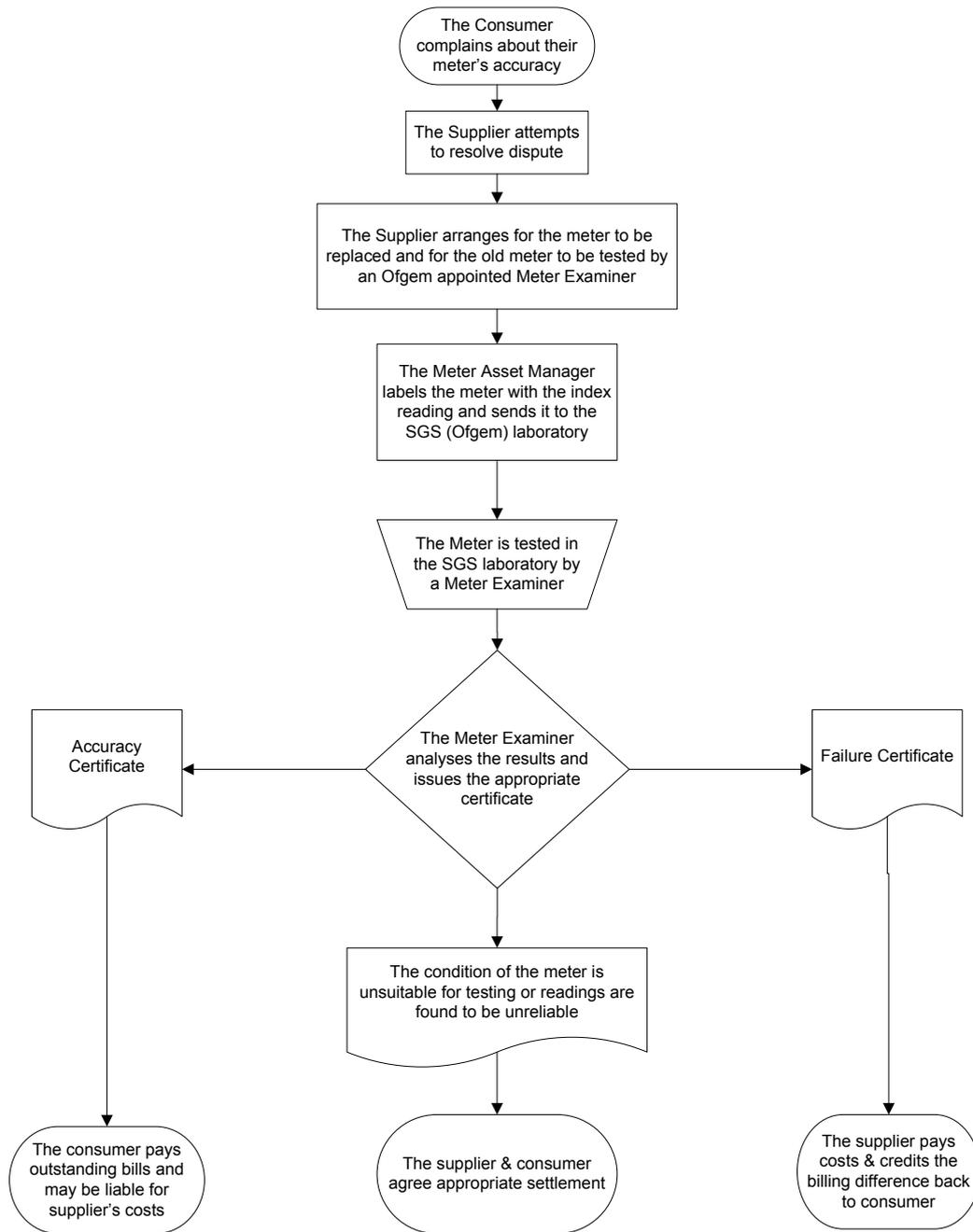
There are some things you can do right now to ensure you start receiving lower energy bills:

- Take and submit your own meter reading rather than accepting an estimated bill. Suppliers are only obliged to read and inspect your meter once every 2 years.
- Ask your supplier for the cost of energy at different times of the day and ensure that you are being charged at the most appropriate tariff for your manner of consumption and the equipment you have connected.
- Where possible use energy at times of the day when charges are low (i.e. use of the washing machine or dishwasher).
- Keep a conscious note of what appliances are switched on and for how long they are on. A recent survey in America showed that if people turned off their Computers and TV when not in use, instead of leaving them on standby, supplies equivalent to the production from seven power stations could be turned off.

Did you know that leaving your TV, radio or computer on standby uses up to half the amount of energy consumed when the appliance is in use?

Further Energy Efficiency Advice can be obtained from your supplier or energywatch.

# Gas Meter Testing



# Electricity Meter Testing

