



## ELECTRICITY, GAS AND WATER METERS

Information for Victorian customers

Meters seem to have been the same for years and years—but the technology is changing. This Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) fact sheet tells you about various meters and explains what's changing.

Properties generally have three meters—one each for electricity, natural gas (if your property has natural gas) and water.

### Unique meter identifiers

Gas and electricity meters have both numbers and unique identifiers. Water meters have unique serial numbers.

The electricity meter identifier is called the National Metering Identifier, or **NMI**. Gas meters have a Metering Installation Registration Number or **MIRN**.

These unique identifiers or meter numbers should be on your bill.

### Do mistakes happen with NMIs and MIRNs?

Yes they do, particularly in transfers from one energy retailer to another. The codes are long and complicated and sometimes mistakes are made.

### Who reads meters?

Water meters are read by the water corporations and they also bill their customers.

Electricity and gas meters are read by electricity and gas distributors—these are the companies that own the electricity poles and wires, the gas pipes, and the meters themselves. The distributors send the meter data to the electricity and gas retailers—so the retailers can bill their customers.

### Service to property charge

A 'service to property' charge is a flat fee for each property and is calculated as a daily charge. It is charged for accessing and maintaining the electricity and gas network. It is not based on how much electricity or gas is used at the property and is shown separately on the bill. If there is the provision for supply at the property then these charges may still apply even if the land is vacant or the meter is removed.

### What are the main types of electricity meters?

**Smart Meters** record usage in half-hour blocks. Most households and small businesses in Victoria now have a Smart Meter. Most Smart Meters are now remotely read, meaning that meter readers will not have to regularly attend properties to take readings.

For more information on Smart Meters, including instructions on how to read a common type of Smart Meter, see EWOV's [Fact Sheet 10: Smart Meter Basics](#), visit the Victorian Government's website: [smartmeters.vic.gov.au](http://smartmeters.vic.gov.au), or visit your electricity distributor's website.



**Analogue meters** have been phased out and are the old style—with a spinning disk and a row of figures that keeps adding up your usage—like a car's odometer.

The meter reading data can be compared to what the meter is showing. If you have peak and off-peak electricity with this old style of meter, you'll usually have two meters and a time-switch.





## Can meters measure incorrectly?

There are Australian Standards for meter accuracy.

Meters can be tested against these standards. New Smart Meters are tested before installation.

Generally, if the meter is found to be running outside the standards, the company pays for the test and amends your bills. Most tests find that meters are operating within Australian Standards.

## Why are some bills estimated?

Electricity and gas companies, and water corporations, are allowed to estimate your bill if the meter reader can't get to the meter. Locked gates, vegetation or dogs can all block meter access, leading to estimated bills.

If your bill is based on an estimate—rather than an actual meter read—the bill must show this. If the estimate is too low you'll get a 'catch-up' bill when your meter is later read.

As a customer, you have to allow access for your meter to be read. If access is continually denied, your electricity or gas may end up being disconnected—though retailers generally prefer to provide you with an estimated bill.



If your reading has been estimated, it must say so on your bill.

If electricity or gas meter access is a problem, consider getting a suitable Victorian Power Industry (VPI) lock. Some hardware stores, electrical wholesalers and locksmiths stock them. The distributors have keys for these locks. For more details and pictures of VPI locks, see section 5.6 of the [Victorian Electricity Distributors Service and Installation Rules](#).

Water corporations don't use VPI locks. If access to your water meter is a problem, speak to your water corporation about alternative solutions.

## Checklist:

Don't know where to start? This checklist may help.

### Things you can do:

- Compare your meter numbers/unique identifiers on your meter with the numbers on your bill. Are they the same?
- Has your bill been estimated? If so, was that due to no access to the meter? Can you make your meter accessible in the future, for example by installing a VPI lock?
- Take your own meter readings on the day that your meter is scheduled to be read or before your meter is exchanged. Compare your notes with the information on your bill. Do they correspond?
- Turn off your appliances and check whether the usage recorded on your meter changes.

### Talking to your company:

- Talk to your energy retailer about your billing concerns.
- Talk to your energy distributor if you are concerned about your meter.
- Talk to your water corporation about water billing or meter concerns.

### Contacting EWOV:

- If you can't sort out the problem with your company directly, contact EWOV.
- Have **all your details** ready, including bills and your own notes.

For more information on estimated bills refer to EWOV's [Fact Sheet 3: Estimated bills and meter access](#).