

Backbilling, refunds and lost payments

Information for Victorian electricity, gas and water customers

→ Sometimes your energy retailer or water company may overcharge you on a bill. Conversely, you might be undercharged and 'backbilled' at a later date. This fact sheet explains why that may happen and the rules that apply.

Billing issues

What can go wrong?

Your payment may get 'lost in the system' if:

- There are problems with the transfer of online payments from the bank/agency to the electricity, gas or water company.
- The company has a problem with its billing system.
- There was a change to your account, such as the payment details or account number

An energy retailer or water company might owe you money if:

- You were overcharged on a previous bill.
- Reconciliation of a bill-smoothing payment plan results in you being owed a refund.
- A security deposit you paid some time ago is due to be returned.

You might owe money and be **backbilled** if:

- There was an error in the previous bill.
- Your company had problems with its billing process and has not been able to issue you with a bill for some time.
- Your last bill, or last few bills, were estimated and the estimate was less than what you actually used. In these cases, you may be able to submit a self-meter read. See our fact sheet – '[Estimated Bills](#)' – for more information.
- Your last bill was based on an incorrect meter reading.
- There was a problem with the reading process for your Smart Meter, solar bi-direction meter or interval meter (these meters automatically send your usage data to your energy distributor, who passes this on to your retailer).

What are my rights?

The [Energy Retail Code](#) and [Water Customer Service Codes](#) (Urban and Rural) set out the rules that apply when you have been overcharged for a payment or backbilled.

Refunds

Energy retailers and water companies must notify and refund you in the following timeframes:

Water: Once your water company becomes aware of an overcharge, they must notify you in 10 business days. You can choose to have this refunded or credited to your account.

Energy:

- *Equal to or more than \$50:* Once the retailer becomes aware of the overcharge, they must notify you in 10 business days. You can tell them how you would like that amount repaid, otherwise, it will be credited to your next bill.
- *Less than \$50:* The overcharged amount will be credited to your next bill.

If you are no longer a customer, the retailer must use its best endeavours to refund you within 10 business days.

If you are at fault for the overcharge, a retailer may limit the amount they refund you.

Security deposits: After you complete one years' payment on time (or two years' payment for business customers), your energy company must return your security deposit within 10 business days. For customers on market contracts, your contract will outline how the security deposit is to be refunded.

Backbilling

If you haven't been billed for all the electricity, gas or water you've used the company can send you a backbill (catch-up bill).

Water:

- Water companies can backbill **up to 12 months prior**.
- You must have equal time to pay the backbill. For example; if the backbill is for 6 months you have 6 months to pay it.

Energy:

- You can be backbilled for any energy used **up to 9 months prior**. Retailers *can't* go back any further than this unless the undercharge is your fault (for example; if you have denied a request for meter access).
- You must be offered at least equal time to pay, and sometimes more – up to a maximum of 12 months.