

Our Customer Service Charter

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A bit about us ...

Every day our skilled and dedicated colleagues do their very best to keep our 7.5 million customers safe and warm, with a gas supply they can rely on and a level of service they can trust.

We don't sell gas; instead we use our 35,000 kilometre pipeline to transport gas to homes and businesses across Wales and the south west of England. It's a vital service, and one we're very proud to deliver.

The companies that do sell you gas are called gas suppliers, and you should contact your gas supplier if you have any questions about buying gas, your gas bill or meter reading. You can find your supplier's telephone number on your gas bill or statement.

Our commitment to customers

All gas distribution companies must ensure that customers receive services that meet a range of minimum guaranteed standards. But Wales & West Utilities strives to do much more. We aim to make sure that our customers always receive outstanding levels of gas safety, reliability and customer service.

That means we do everything we can to get things right - first time and every time. We want to deliver peace of mind and value for money services, so that we are always trusted by the millions of people we serve every day.

Excellent customer service also means that we'll show courtesy and consideration at all times to customers and others we deal with. We will be polite, understanding and respectful of all customers while working to deliver what they need.

Should service issues or complaints arise, we'll resolve them quickly and professionally. Local managers are assigned to oversee each process, and we'll visit customers when requested. Should we be at fault and liable to pay compensation, we'll do it promptly every time.

As some of our customers have disabilities or are vulnerable in other ways, we'll ensure that all are given appropriate support when a need arises. To do it we'll work in partnership with a range of other organisations - including local authorities, other utility companies, and various support agencies. We will also collaborate with others in our industry to develop and implement best practice in serving vulnerable customers.

By working closely together we will provide a helping hand to those who need it, responding well to each person's specific needs. And we'll never rest on our laurels, instead seeking improvements by continually monitoring our policies and procedures.

We know that customers can't choose their gas network, but our aim is to make sure that if they could they would choose us.

About this Code of Practice

This document sets out when and how you might expect to be contacted by Wales & West Utilities and how you can get in touch with us to enquire or complain about any service we provide. It also details the steps Wales & West Utilities takes to ensure that only properly trained Wales & West Utilities staff or contractors make visits to your home and the special services available for customers who are of pensionable age, disabled, chronically sick or living with children aged under five or otherwise in a vulnerable situation, and in need of additional services related to their access, communication and safety needs.

Accessibility

On request we will provide a copy of this document to you, free of charge, in another format which allows you to read or understand it for example audio, large print, Braille or another language.

Contact Us

If you have any general enquiries, please contact us on freephone 0800 912 2999.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and have a Minicom or Text phone you can use it to call our Customer Services team on 02920 278 707.

You can also contact us via email, enquiries@wwutilities.co.uk

If you have a compliment or complaint, please call freephone 0800 294 6645 (calls are monitored).

Facebook: facebook.com/wwutilities

Twitter: @wwutilities

For more information please read our complaint handling procedure

http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/1266/complaints_handling_procedure.pdf

Address: Wales & West Utilities Limited
Wales & West House
Spooner Close
Celtic Springs
Coedkernew
Newport
NP10 8FZ

Gas emergencies

Staying safe - When you smell gas

We know that safety is your number one priority – it's ours as well. Here's what to do if you smell gas. First things first:

Call freephone 0800 111 999 immediately. We'll be with you as soon as possible to make your property safe. Then, while you're waiting for one of our engineers, you can do the following:

Stay calm: Our engineers are experts at dealing with gas leaks quickly and with very little fuss.

Switch off: Turn off all your gas appliances and, if possible, switch off the gas at the meter (unless the meter is in the cellar or basement, in which case don't go in).

Ventilate: Open all your windows and doors.

Put it out: Don't smoke or use naked flames.

Leave: If there's a smell of gas in the cellar or basement, please wait outside or with a neighbour.

Good to know: If you're renting, by law your landlord has to arrange yearly gas safety checks. You can sign up for a free reminder service at www.staygassafe.co.uk.

You can call the gas emergency number 0800 111 999 at any time, day or night, 365 days a year. The call is free. Just pick up the phone, dial the number and you will be put through to a trained operator who will take all the details. All calls to the National Gas Emergency Service are recorded, and may be monitored.

Wales & West Utilities is responsible for attending reported gas emergencies inside or outside your home and business in Wales & West Utilities' area.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and have a Minicom or Textphone you can use it to call the gas emergency service. The Minicom number is: **029 2027 8707**

The operator who takes your details will ask you if there are any special circumstances Wales & West Utilities needs to know about when we call. It will help us to help you if we know of any special needs such as visual or hearing impairment or difficulties with mobility.

If English is not your first language don't worry, you can still call the gas emergency service on **0800 111 999** and they will find an interpreter who can translate for you.

Wales & West Utilities may also need to visit you to deal with a reported gas emergency. If we are called to your home, we will abide by this code of practice.

Staying safe – Carbon Monoxide (CO)

In a medical emergency, don't delay, phone 999.

You've probably heard about the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Although it can be very serious, having all the information means you'll know just what to look out for and can stay safe.

What's CO?

You can't see it. You can't smell it. You can't taste it. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas that is released when any fossil fuel that burns – such as gas, oil, wood, petrol and coal - doesn't burn properly. This can happen when:

- An appliance hasn't been fitted correctly
- An appliance has been poorly maintained
- A flue, chimney or vent is blocked

Breathing it in can make you unwell, and it can kill. If you suspect CO poisoning, your emergency numbers are: 0800 111 999 (gas) 0845 6014406 (coal) 08456 585080 (oil) In a medical emergency, don't delay, call 999 immediately.

What to look out for

- Gas appliances burning with a yellow or orange flame rather than a blue flame
- More condensation inside your windows
- Pilot lights frequently blowing out
- Soot or yellow and brown staining on or around your appliances

Possible symptoms

- 'Flu-like' symptoms (without the fever)
- Chest or stomach pains
- Strange behaviour
- Feeling or being sick
- Breathlessness
- Feeling tired or drowsy
- Giddiness or headaches
- Problems with your vision

Three ways to stay safe

1 Make sure all your fuel-burning appliances are serviced once a year by an engineer who is registered with Gas Safe.

2 Get your chimneys swept and make sure your flues are clear.

3 Install a certified CO alarm. These cost around £15 and you can buy them from your local DIY store, supermarket or even from your gas supplier.

Taking action

Here's what to do if you suspect CO poisoning:

Get in touch and call freephone 0800 111 999 or freephone 0800 371 787 (Minicom) and we will be with you as soon as possible.

Switch off: Turn off any gas appliances.

Ventilate: Open your doors and windows.

Leave: Either wait outside or with a neighbour

Repair: Unfortunately we are unable to carry out repairs on your appliances. However, you can easily find an engineer who is registered with Gas Safe <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/find-an-engineer/> or telephone 0800 408 5500.

Alternative Heating and Cooking

If it is necessary - for safety reasons – for Wales & West Utilities to disconnect the gas supply to your home, we will seek to provide you with alternative temporary heating and cooking facilities if you or anyone you live is of pensionable age, disabled, chronically sick or living with children aged under five or otherwise in a vulnerable situation, and in need of additional services related to your access, communication and safety needs.

However, it is Wales & West Utilities' policy to be sympathetic to the needs of all consumers. We will always try to make sure that in exceptional circumstances, temporary heating and cooking needs are met, using local judgement on a case-by-case basis. When we call, please tell us if you have any special needs we should know about.

Working in the highway

During the essential maintenance and repair of the gas distribution system to ensure continued safe operation, there may be some inconvenience caused. We will try to use the most up to date techniques to help keep disruption to a minimum.

We endeavour to ensure:

Not less than 5 working days' notice of any planned mains or service replacement works in your road, to inform you of an expected date when, and an explanation of the need for, an interruption to your gas supply as a result of our planned activities.

All vehicles and plant will be parked safely avoiding obstruction to the road and driveways etc.

Where it is necessary to excavate across access roads and driveways we will always speak to the property owners concerned before starting the work.

The site will be left in a safe and tidy condition at the end of each working day.

Wales & West Utilities staff and its contractors will act professionally and courteously at all times.

Entering your home

From time to time Wales & West Utilities may need to visit your home to inspect or maintain gas equipment on your property, to deal with a reported gas emergency or to complete a visit requested by yourself for work to be done. The visit will either be made by a Wales & West Utilities employee or a contractor working on our behalf. Wales & West Utilities has arrangements in place so that you can be sure that only properly trained Wales & West Utilities staff or contractors make visits to your home. If you wish to confirm the identity of the person visiting your premises you can call the number on the back of their identity card and we will confirm whether the person is an authorised representative working on Wales & West Utilities' behalf.

We will ensure that:

All staff and contractors are fit and proper persons to enter your home. Our recruitment procedures involve appropriate background checks such as checking references.

Our staff and contractors are appropriately qualified and fully trained for the purpose of the visit and will be courteous at all times in their dealings with you, without showing undue familiarity. They will give clear, accurate explanations using appropriate and sensitive language and will respect your property and premises.

All authorised employees and contractors show you an identity card displaying the company name, their own name, a reference number, and a colour photograph of the individual.

Where possible, all vehicles used for visits to your premises will have our or contractor's logo on.

Where possible, all our employees and contractors wear branded clothing indicating they are representing Wales & West Utilities.

All our employees and contractors are able to tell you the National Gas Emergency Service telephone number.

We take all necessary steps to ensure that all ID cards are returned when an employee leaves the company or following the expiry date of the card.

All our employees and contractors are aware of the contents of this document and comply with it at all times.

Getting Help – The Priority Service Register (PSR)

Did you know that every gas supplier – the company you pay your bills to – has what's called a Priority Service Register? This register helps us and your gas supplier to make sure we really look after the people who need it most.

Here's what you need to know...

Why join the register?

- You will be offered alternative heating and cooking appliances if your gas supply is interrupted.
- You can agree a password so you know our engineers are genuine.
- Your supplier may be able to move your gas meter if you're not able to access it.
- You can ask your supplier to send their bill to anybody (for example a family member or carer) who has agreed to receive it.
- You may receive a free gas safety check for your appliances if everyone at the property is eligible to register (if you do not own your own home your landlord is responsible for ensuring that any gas appliances, fittings and flues are safe).
- We operate a 'Knock and Wait' service – our engineers will give you longer to come to your door.

Should I be on the register?

If you answer 'yes' to any of the following questions, get in touch with your gas supplier to see if you can join their register:

- Are you of pensionable age?
- Are you chronically sick?
- Do you, or does anybody you live with, have a registered disability?

Do you live with children aged under 5?

- Do you have any other specific need?

Good to know

It's not just gas suppliers who have priority services registers. Many utility companies – including water and electricity – have similar systems in place so it may be worth getting in touch.

Find out more at www.wwutilities.co.uk/services/safe-warm/

Passwords

Good to know – Even if you are not on the Priority Services Register, and you would like to feel more secure, we can agree a password with you when we make an appointment. We will quote this when we visit you so you will know the caller is genuine.

Customer Satisfaction and Complaints

Customer Satisfaction

Our regulator Ofgem has included a condition in our licence to operate that requires us to carry out independent customer satisfaction surveys every quarter. We use a market research company to conduct a postal survey on our behalf for our three main services:

- New gas connections/service alterations
- Our emergency and repair service
- Our gas mains replacement service

The survey questions cover all aspects of the way we work so we can get a better idea of how our customers feel, see what we could be doing better and measure how well our improvements are working.

The latest annual results available can be found can be found at our website on <http://www.wutilities.co.uk/about-us/our-company/publications/>

Complaints

If there is a problem with the service you have received from Wales & West Utilities, then please contact us in writing, by email or by telephone. It will be helpful, when contacting us, if you can provide any information relating to your case i.e. reference numbers so that we can deal with your complaint more quickly. Wales & West Utilities treats all complaints seriously and confidentially. Your complaint will be handled in a courteous, prompt and straightforward manner.

For more information please read our complaint handling procedure http://www.wutilities.co.uk/media/1266/complaints_handling_procedure.pdf

How to contact us

We will be better able to help you if we can direct your complaint / query to the contact best able to deal with it. Please choose the most appropriate contact from the descriptions below.

For complaints relating to the installation, removal, exchange or maintenance of a National Grid Meter, please call 0845 606 6766

For complaints relating to repairs of gas escapes, mains replacement activities, plant maintenance and connections or any other issue please contact:

Customer Services
Wales & West Utilities Ltd
Wales & West House
Spooner Close, Celtic Springs
Coedkernew
Newport, NP10 8FZ

Telephone: 0800 2946645

Email address: enquiries@wwutilities.co.uk

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and have a Minicom or Textphone you can use it to call our customer services team on 02920 278 707.

Wales & West Utilities uses the information gathered from complaints to highlight its failures in the service it provides in order to make improvements.

Stages of our complaints process

Stage 1: Review by the Customer Services Team

When you contact us we will call you (or write to you if you have not informed us of a contact telephone number), within 2 days of receipt to acknowledge your complaint. We will then investigate your complaint fully and give you a substantive response within ten working days of receipt. If a full response is not possible within this timescale, or a visit to your premises is required to resolve your complaint we will:

Agree a mutually convenient time with you for the visit to your premises

Issue you with an initial written response within ten working days of receipt. This initial response will give you details of who you can contact regarding your complaint and will also inform you of the date when we will issue you with a substantive response.

Keep you informed of progress and where action is required by Wales & West Utilities to put things right we will try to resolve the matter promptly.

Issue the substantive response within 20 working days from receipt.

Stage 2: Referral to a Senior Manager

If you are not happy with the way that the Wales & West Utilities Customer Services team has dealt with your complaint then you can request for the matter to be escalated to a senior manager.

They will investigate your complaint and work with you to resolve the problem.

Stage 3: Final Review by a Member of the Executive Team

If after discussing your complaint with a senior manager, you are still not fully satisfied you can ask for your complaint to be escalated further for a formal review our Director of Business Services.

Stage 4: Energy Ombudsman

We will do all we can to solve your problem by working with you. However if you are still unhappy with our actions and you have followed Stages 1-3, you have the right to contact the energy ombudsman. This is a free and independent dispute resolution service. The ombudsman will ask you for a full account of your dealings with us and they will also contact us to gain a factual understanding of the case from our perspective. The Ombudsman will make a final decision and inform you of the outcome.

Energy Supply Ombudsman
PO Box 966
Warrington
WA4 9DF

Telephone: 0845 055 0760

Fax: 0845 055 0765

Email: enquiries@energy-ombudsman.org.uk

Staying Warm

Top tips

When the temperature dips, it can be difficult to keep yourself warm. Here are our five top tips for staying comfortable indoors:

Fit thermal linings to your curtains and close them at dusk to keep the heat in.

Reduce draughts in your home, especially around doors and windows, lag hot-water tanks and pipes and insulate your loft, but never block up air vents.

Wear several thin layers of clothes – this will keep you warmer than one thick layer.

Keep your hands and feet warm.

Use a thermometer to check the temperature of your rooms. Your living room should be around 21°C, while the rest of your home (including your bedroom) should be around 18°C.

More help to stay warm

Warm Home Discount

This is a government scheme for people struggling with heating costs. It can offer money off your electricity bill. You'll need to contact your energy supplier to find out if they can help you. Find out more at www.gov.uk/thewarm-home-discount-scheme/what-youll-get

Cold Weather Payment

This is extra help if you're getting certain benefits. Payments are made when your local temperature is either recorded as, or forecast to be, an average of zero degrees celsius or below for seven days in a row. You do not need to apply as it will be given automatically. If you do not get your payment, tell your Pension Centre or Jobcentre Plus office. Find out more at www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment/overview

Winter Fuel Payment

This offers between £100 and £300 tax-free to help with your heating bills. Ask your energy supplier if they can help you. Find out more at www.gov.uk/winter-fuelpayment/Overview

Energy Company Obligations

Energy Company Obligations (ECO) mean that, by law, energy suppliers must improve the efficiency of households. If you're on a low income or classed as a vulnerable household, you could benefit from help with new heating and home insulation. Contact your energy supplier to find out more.

Fuel Tariffs

It's always a good idea to do a price comparison on your gas and electricity suppliers and then choose the best deal for you. Check the Government's list of approved energy price-comparison sites here: www.goenergysshopping.co.uk/en-gb

Disabled Facilities Grant

You could qualify for a grant from your local council to make changes to your home. Find out more at www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants/overview

More help and advice

When it comes to staying safe and warm, there's plenty of help available. Here's a list of useful agencies.

Gas Safe Register

Phone: 0800 408 5500

Website: www.gassaferegister.co.uk

This is the official list of gas engineers who are registered to work safely and legally on boilers, cookers, fires and all other gas appliances.

Energy Saving Trust

Phone: 0300 123 1234

Website: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

They can give independent, expert advice on saving energy in your home.

National Energy Action

Phone: 0191 261 5677

Website: www.nea.org.uk

They aim for everyone to be able to afford to heat their home and campaign for greater investment in energy efficiency to help those who are most in need.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Phone: Wales 03444 772 020

England 03444 111 444

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/energy

CAB can give free, independent advice so that you know your rights as an energy consumer.

Age UK/Age Cymru

Age UK Phone: 0800 169 6565

Website: www.ageuk.com

Age Cymru Phone: 08000 223 444

Website: www.ageuk.org/cymru

They give advice to older people on money, care, health, housing and more.

Scope UK

Phone: 0808 800 3333

Website: www.scope.org.uk

They work to make the world a better place for disabled people and their families.

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Phone: 0303 123 9999

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

RNIB provide information, support and advice to people with sight loss.

Action on Hearing Loss

Phone: 0808 808 0123

Website: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

They are experts in providing support for people with hearing loss and tinnitus.

Standards of Service

Wales & West Utilities' activities are covered by a range of standards of performance. These standards cover things like restoring supplies and connections. You may be eligible to receive compensation payments if Wales & West Utilities does not meet some of these standards. In such cases, Wales & West Utilities makes compensation payments to you directly or via your gas supplier.

For a complete description of each standard please see our Notice of Rights on our website at <http://www.wwestutilities.co.uk/media/2179/gdn-notice-of-rights-2015-16.pdf>

Standard		Standard Description	Compensation for failure of the standard
GS1	Restoring a gas supply after an unplanned interruption	If you are a domestic or a small non domestic customer and your gas supply is interrupted, we will reconnect you within 24 hours.	We will pay £30 for Domestic customers, £50 for Small Non Domestic customers up to a maximum of £1000
GS2	Reinstatement of customers premises	On completion of any initiated work on your premises, the premises will be reinstated within 5 working days.	We will pay £50 for Domestic customers, £100 for Non Domestic customers for each succeeding period of 5 working days until reinstatement is completed.
GS3	Domestic customers on the Priority Services Register	If your gas supply is interrupted we will provide alternative heating and cooking facilities within 4 hours or 8 hours where 250 or more premises are affected.	We will pay £24 if we receive a valid claim within three months of the interruption
GS13	Prior notice of planned interruptions to gas supply	Give the customers at least 5 working days in advance of any planned interruption to their gas supply	We will pay £20 for Domestic customers and £50 for Non Domestic customers if we receive a valid claim within three months of the interruption.

GS14	Responding to complaints	On receipt of a Complaint, issue a substantive response within 10 days. Where a site visit or third party enquiries are required, we will give you a first response within 10 days and a full response within 20 days.	We will pay £20 and an extra £20 for every 5 working days until a substantive response is issued up to a maximum of £100.
Connecting a new gas supply and altering the position of a gas pipe			
GS4	Provision of standard quotations up to 275kWh	If you request a standard quotation for a new connection or an alteration to an existing connection up to and including a rate of flow of 275kWh per hour it will be issued within 6 working days.	We will pay £10 and an extra £10 for each working day after this up to the quotation sum or £250 whichever is the lowest
GS5	Provision of non standard quotations up to 275kWh	If you request a non standard quotation for a new connection or an alteration to an existing connection up to and including a rate of flow of 275kWh per hour it will be issued within 11 working days.	We will pay £10 and an extra £10 for each working day after this up to the quotation sum or £250 whichever is the lowest
GS6	Provision of non standard quotations over 275kWh	If you request a non standard quotation for a new connection or an alteration to an existing connection up to and including a rate of flow of over 275kWh per hour it will be issued within 11 working days.	We will pay £20 and an extra £20 for each working day after this up to the quotation sum or £500 whichever is the lowest

GS7	Accuracy of quotations	If we fail to provide an accurate quotation	We will refund you any overcharge
GS8	Responses to Land Enquiries	Respond to land enquiry in 5 working days for a new or altered existing connection	We will pay £40 and an extra £40 for each working day after this up to the maximum of £250 for connections up to and including 275kWh and £500 for connections exceeding 275kWh
GS9	Provision of commencement and substantial completion dates up to 275kWh	Within 20 days of acceptance of a quotation, offer a date for commencement of works on the connection and substantial completion on specified days up to 275kWh per hour	We will pay £20 and an extra £20 for each working day after this up to the quotation sum or £250 whichever is the lowest
GS10	Provision of commencement and substantial completion dates over 275kWh	Within 20 days of acceptance of a quotation, offer a date for commencement of works on the connection and substantial completion on specified days over 275kWh per hour	We will pay £40 and an extra £40 for each working day after this up to the quotation sum or £500 whichever is the lowest

GS11	Substantial completion by agreed date	<p>Where we have provided a date for substantially completing a new connection or an alteration to an existing connection with contract sum of:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) up to and including £1000 ii) over £1000 to £4000 iii) over £4000 to £20000 iv) over £20000 to £50000 v) over £50000 to £100000 	<p>We will pay you:-</p> <p>£20 (capped at the lesser of £200 or the contract sum)</p> <p>Lessor of £100 or 2.5% of the contract sum (capped at 25% of contract sum)</p> <p>£100 (capped at 25% of the contract sum)</p> <p>£100 (capped at £5000)</p> <p>£150 (capped at £9000)</p>
GS12	Notification and Payments	<p>Where we have failed any of the above Standards we will write to you and make the payment within 20 working days of the compensation become due.</p>	<p>We will pay £20 in addition to any payments made under the other Guaranteed Standards</p>