

Meridian Consumer Care Policy

Meridian is all about providing great service and making things easy for you. We understand that electricity plays an essential role in all of our customers' lives – it's important to your health and wellbeing, and for keeping you connected with your friends and family. As your electricity retailer, we're here to help you.

We're committed to ensuring you stay safe and connected. This policy applies to our residential customers and is our promise to help keep you safe and help you manage your energy costs. It also includes other commitments to you, such as:

- communicating with mutual respect and care during all interactions as part of our values/tikanga;
- working with you collaboratively and constructively to solve problems;
- working to understand your situation so that we can be proactive in offering assistance to meet your needs;
- communicating with you in a timely and clear way;
- making sure you have every opportunity to choose the best plan to meet your needs;
- working with you to resolve payment difficulties as early as possible and, with your permission, linking you to one or more support agencies or social agencies to assist you; and
- working with you to try to keep your electricity connected if you're having payment difficulties.

If you're looking to become a Meridian customer, we'll try to communicate with you clearly about your rights and the choices you can make, even if you haven't joined us yet. We offer all our consumers a variety of advice and support, ranging from helping make decisions on the best plans for your electricity consumption through to finding the best payment plan for you.

We might not always get it right, but we're committed to learning continually from our experiences to improve the support we offer you.

As a customer, you have rights and responsibilities with us. You can read our [Standard Terms and Conditions](#), along with any other terms and conditions that may apply to you.

Our Consumer Care Policy is aligned to the Electricity Authority's Consumer Care Guidelines (we have either adopted the recommendations in the Guidelines or taken an alternative action to achieve the same purpose and outcome). This Consumer Care Policy isn't a legally binding document and doesn't form part of our Standard Terms and Conditions. If there are any inconsistencies between this Policy and any of our terms and conditions, our terms and conditions will prevail.

Your personal information

In providing you with electricity and related services, we need some information from you. We will ensure this information is stored securely and only used for its intended purpose. We ask that you ensure your details are correct and let us know if anything changes. This will help us to:

- communicate with you in a clear and timely way;
- maintain accurate records of our interactions with you;
- confirm our contractual commitments to each other; and
- help resolve any disputes between us.

You can find out more about how we manage your personal information in our [Standard Terms and Conditions](#).

Joining Meridian

Our plans and payment options are available online, or you can contact us to discuss which plan, and payment option, meets your needs. This helps you make an informed decision.

Before you become a customer, we may ask you questions about yourself and your situation. We'll also get your permission to do a credit check.

If we do not accept you as a customer, we'll tell you why. If you're having a hard time finding an electricity retailer, we can refer you to a financial mentor or give you advice on what you can do.

If you'd like an independent place to check energy prices, you can use the free Powerswitch website to [compare plans here](#).

Choosing the right electricity plan

We offer a range of electricity plans designed to suit different households and to provide extra services you might like to receive.

To help you decide which electricity plan might suit you best, you should tell us about how you use energy in your household and your past electricity consumption.

All our plans include a daily fixed charge and variable electricity usage charge(s), which are based on your meter type and your network's pricing category.

We offer a number of payment options, subject to availability criteria. We also offer LevelPay, which averages out your bills and allows you to pay equal amounts spread over the year. We'll check in on your account every now and then to make sure that your payments are covering the amount of power you're using. If it looks like you need to pay more or less, we'll be in touch.

If there's a smart meter installed at your property, you can check how much energy you are using, plus other information about your account on our app or online at any time. This can help you make decisions about whether you're on the right usage plan. Simply download the [app or sign into your account online here](#).

For advice on ways to use energy more efficiently, see our [energy saving tips here](#).

Authorised persons

You can ask us to communicate with you using an authorised person such as a family member, friend, support person, or community worker.

Please ask this person first and, if they agree, let us know their name and contact details.

Speaking your language

If we don't speak your language, you can use an authorised person to talk with us instead. Another option is to use a different communication method that suits you. For example, you can receive information from us in writing. We also have access to a real-time translation service to support you.

If you're Deaf, Hearing Impaired, Blind or Speech Impaired, the New Zealand Relay Service offer a free service that can support you to contact us. You can find out more about this service [here](#).

If you have payment difficulties

We'll get in touch with you when we see your bill is overdue. We can help you manage your payments, particularly if you are having difficulties.

Here are some ways we can help:

- we can check to see you are on the best plan for your usage;
- we can check to see if you are eligible for LevelPay, which allows you to pay the same amount in weekly, fortnightly, or monthly instalments, spread over the year;
- where your electricity consumption changes significantly, we can make you aware of the change and tips for ways to help you pay, if you need it; and
- we can look at setting up a special payment plan arrangement to suit you. We will then check your payments to make sure your plan is working well, or contact you if we think there is a better way for you to meet your payments.

Linking you with financial mentoring and support agencies

If you're struggling to keep up with your bill payments we can, with your permission, connect you with support agencies, who will help you with things like paying your bill.

We'll give you time to talk to these agencies and receive help without disconnecting your electricity supply. We'll work with you and your support agency and make sure we all use agreed ways of communicating with each other.

The following organisations may also be able to help with financial assistance and/or free budgeting advice:

- **Social agency assistance:** You may be able to get extra assistance from Work and Income or another social agency. You can contact Work and Income on 0800 559 009, or you can visit online at www.workandincome.govt.nz
- **Budgeting advice:** You may want to get some budgeting advice if you are finding it difficult to pay your bill. This friendly, helpful service is available for free from Money Talks. You can contact the free financial helpline on 0800 345 123 or SMS on 4209, or visit online at www.moneytalks.co.nz

Disconnection for non-payment of your electricity bill

Disconnection for non-payment is a last resort.

We may disconnect your electricity supply if you fail to pay your bill in full or if you default on the payment plan we have agreed with you.

Before disconnecting your electricity supply, we'll make multiple attempts to communicate with you, using more than one method and by contacting your authorised person if you've provided us with one. We may also contact you at different times of the day.

Except in the case of requested, agreed, emergency or safety-related disconnections, we will;

- give you at least 10 business days' notice of disconnection; and
- provide a final warning no less than 24 hours before any disconnection. We'll also take all reasonable steps to ensure you receive the final warning.

The final disconnection warning we send you will include:

- the address of the premises to be disconnected;
- the timeframe for disconnecting your electricity supply;
- how you may be able to avoid disconnection of your electricity supply (if applicable);
- the cost of reconnection (including details of any charges you will need to pay in addition to paying your unpaid invoice);
- our payment options;
- information and contact details of Work and Income and other budget advice, support and social agencies that may be able to help;
- information about our Medically Dependent Consumer application process; and
- our complaints resolution process and the contact details of Utilities Disputes;

We'll only disconnect your electricity supply on a business day, excluding Fridays and excluding the day prior to a public holiday. We do not disconnect the electricity supply of medically dependent consumers for non-payment.

If no one has signed up as a customer for the electricity being used at a residential site, we may disconnect the electricity at any stage. However, we'll send sign up and disconnection information to the address before we do this.

There may be times where we can't disconnect in the timeframe we've given. If this is the case, we'll send another notice with the new timeframe before disconnecting the electricity supply.

Reconnecting your electricity supply

You need to contact us if you want to reconnect after your electricity supply has been disconnected. We'll arrange to reconnect you, provided you meet our criteria and pay any applicable charges, including:

- the total amount outstanding on your account;
- any disconnection fees and additional fees incurred during the disconnection process;
- any reconnection fees; and
- any charges that have accumulated since disconnection, including fixed daily and metering charges.

Our schedule of service fees is available on our website [here](#)

We may also require you to:

- be at your property at the time we reconnect;
- make sure we can get safe on-going access to your property (to our satisfaction) so our staff and contractors can undertake the reconnection activity;
- agree to any additional and reasonable terms and conditions we think are needed; and
- make sure you switch off all appliances at the time we reconnect to ensure they are not damaged by any power surges.

Medically Dependent Consumers

The health and wellbeing of our customers is important to us.

If you or someone living with you (even for a short period) depend on electricity to run critical medical support equipment, then you are considered a 'medically dependent consumer'. Examples of critical medical equipment include ventilators, renal dialysis machines and oxygen concentrators.

We'll ask you if this applies when you first sign up with us and we'll remind you to tell us annually. If your situation changes, or if you think that you or someone in your household may be medically dependent on electricity, you should get in touch with us to let us know as soon as possible.

Once you have let us know that you or someone living at your property is medically dependent, with your permission, we will collect and record all relevant information from you and register this status on your account. We'll also share this information with certain third-party providers, for example, your network and metering companies and our field services staff, so they are aware if they're working at your property (e.g. checking or upgrading your electricity meter).

The medical dependency will need to be verified by a qualified health practitioner (e.g. your doctor, District Health Board, private hospital) at your own cost unless we ask for a re-verification. If you've been supplied with a "Notice of Potential Medically Dependent Consumer Status", please send us a copy.

If we don't receive the required verification from you, or your Health Practitioner by the date we've outlined, we may remove your status as a medically dependent consumer.

If you're a medically dependent consumer, it's important that you have an emergency response plan in place in case there's an unplanned power cut or emergency disconnection.

An emergency response plan should include anything you need to do to keep yourself safe for the full duration of any power outage. It could include having a fully charged battery available, going to a friend or family member's house that has electricity or, in serious cases, calling an ambulance to be taken to hospital.

For more information on preparing an emergency response plan for your household, go to: www.eranz.org.nz/medically-dependant

Fees

As a customer, you're responsible for paying all charges and fees from the date your property gets switched to us, or from when you first used electricity or services we provide.

Your electricity plan's pricing charges are included in the plan information we send you at the time you join us and on our website. These charges may be updated from time to time if you

change plans or if we notify you of changes permitted under our Standard Terms and Conditions.

Our schedule of service fees is available on our website [here](#). This schedule includes charges for any additional services.

If you ask for or require an additional service, we'll tell you the amount we will charge for it or provide an estimate so you can decide if you want to go ahead. We'll also let you know if there's anything you can do to avoid being charged the fee.

We may need to adjust your pricing plan if the information we have used to set the prices is incorrect or needs to be amended. We will let you know if this happens.

Comprehensive Credit Reporting

If you look to open an account with us, we'll ask your permission to approach a credit reporting agency for information about you relating to your credit situation. We use comprehensive credit reporting, which takes into account both positive and negative credit information such as the type and amount of credit you have and whether you make repayments on time.

We use your credit score to assess your credit worthiness and whether we can open an account for you. We also take into account other relevant factors that we're made aware of at the time of the application.

The credit reporting agencies in New Zealand are [Centrix](#), [illion](#) and [Equifax](#). You can contact each of these agencies directly to get your free credit report and see your credit score.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner website has some useful information on [credit reporting and what it means for you](#) as well as a [summary of your rights under the Credit Reporting Privacy Code](#).

Family violence

We're committed to providing confidential and respectful assistance to customers experiencing family violence. If you're affected by family violence and need access to external support services, or there is another way that Meridian can assist you, please don't hesitate to contact our team when it is safe to do so.

We recognise that family violence is a potential cause of payment difficulty. We'll provide support and assistance to customers in debt or who anticipate payment difficulties and will work with you to find a solution for your individual situation.

There are a number of external support services who can help customers affected by family violence. We'll provide you with information about the availability of support services that is safe, respectful and appropriate in your circumstances. In particular, we may refer you to the following services:

- Women's Refuge – available on [0800 733 843](tel:0800733843) or online at www.womensrefuge.org.nz
- Shine – available on [0508 744 633](tel:0508744633) or online at www.2shine.org.nz
- It's Not OK – available on [0800 456 450](tel:0800456450) or online at www.areyouok.org.nz

In an emergency, if you are not feeling safe, always call 111.

Feedback and complaints

You can contact us at any time to talk about your situation, ask questions about your bill, ask questions about this policy, or to give us feedback.

If you have any concerns about the service you have received from us or if we haven't lived up to our commitments to you, please let us know.

You can raise a complaint by contacting our Customer Care Team on 0800 496 496, by emailing us at hello@meridianenergy.co.nz or by writing to:

Meridian Energy

PO Box 212

Christchurch 8140

We'll try to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible and will acknowledge your complaint within two working days of receiving it.

If we haven't resolved your complaint, we'll respond to you within seven working days to let you know the steps that have been taken or are/will be taken to try and resolve your complaint. We'll attempt to resolve your complaint within 20 working days after receiving it.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, or at any point, you can contact Utilities Disputes for free independent advice on 0800 22 33 40 or by sending an email to info@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz.

This policy was approved on 30 November 2021 and may be updated from time to time.

We commit to providing information to the Electricity Authority in accordance with the information disclosure and monitoring recommendations in the Consumer Care Guidelines.