



Press Release

Energy customers advised to be 'Bill Aware' as CER launches www.energycustomers.ie

New website provides consumers with information on Ireland's energy market

20th October 2008: The Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) today launched a new website for domestic energy customers and has urged householders to become more 'bill aware'. 'In a climate where energy prices are increasing, we want to empower customers to actively manage their energy costs and to ensure that their bills always reflect their usage', said Dr. Paul McGowan, Director of Customer Affairs with the Commission for Energy Regulation.

The new website, www.energycustomers.ie provides customers with an overview of the electricity and natural gas markets in Ireland; gives information on customers' rights and energy supplier codes of conduct and also explains what customers should do if they experience problems with their bills, their connection to the electricity or natural gas network or some other issue relating to energy supply.

Speaking at the launch of www.energycustomers.ie Dr. McGowan said; "The average household electricity bill is €736 per year, while the average gas bill is €910 a year. These are significant costs in the annual household budget and it is important that electricity and gas customers take action to ensure that arrears do not build up on their accounts. Energy companies have payment plans in place to assist customers who are in difficulty so I would urge consumers to proactively work with their energy supplier to tackle the problem before it develops".

Dr. McGowan said older people need have no worries of being cut-off during the cold winter months. "All suppliers guarantee not to disconnect any elderly customer during the winter months, and again payment plans can be agreed which may make it easier for older people if they are experiencing difficulty".

According to Dr. McGowan some householders can inadvertently run up arrears with their energy suppliers if they do not receive meter readings on a regular basis. "With many people working during the

day, meter readers may be unable to access the meter and estimated readings are used to invoice the customer. Every householder should work with their energy supplier and provide a meter reading when they get a bill based on an estimated reading that does not reflect what they see on their meter. It is a very easy way to ensure that their bill more accurately reflects their actual energy usage, which can often be more, but also less than that estimated by the supplier”.

The CER has also launched a new Energy Customer Team which provides a complaint resolution service for customers who are in dispute with their supplier. The CER has required all suppliers to put in place a code of practice on complaint resolution. Where a resolution cannot be reached having followed these procedures, the CER will investigate and issue a decision. The CER has legislative powers to direct suppliers to compensate customers, if they believe this is required. ‘Providing an independent service reassures customers that their complaint is being dealt with in a balanced way and that all aspects are considered when reaching a final decision.’ said Fiona Hannon, Manager of the Energy Customers Team.

“The electricity and gas market are now fully open to competition and new energy suppliers are entering the market. In this new environment, the Commission’s aim is to enhance customer awareness of new choices, enable customers to exercise that choice, ensure customer protection, establish standards and practices and ensure quality and security of supply. www.energycustomers.ie is an important reference for consumers in terms of knowing what they should expect from their energy supplier and understanding how the energy market in Ireland operates”, said Paul McGowan. “It is vitally important for consumers to inform themselves, know their energy consumption patterns, be bill aware and actively manage their energy costs, particularly when energy is a significant part of the annual household budget”.

Consumers will have the opportunity to meet with the CER’s new Energy Customers Team at the Ideal Homes Exhibition, which will be held in Simmonscourt, RDS from 23rd – 27th October.

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