



How can the Consumer Council help you?

The Consumer Council handles business and domestic complaints about electricity, gas and water, provides advice about energy and water issues and liaises with customers, energy and water companies and other relevant parties. If you need our advice or help, please call us on **0845 601 6022**.

If you have a complaint about your energy supplier, follow this simple three-step guide.

Step 1

Did you contact the company concerned? If not, contact them first. This gives them the chance to explain and put it right.

Step 2

Give them as much information as possible about your complaint including customer reference numbers, dates, times and employee names.

Step 3

If you are still not satisfied, contact the Consumer Council on **0845 601 6022** for free, independent help and advice.

Overview of the Electricity Market

Historically, Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) has supplied most of the electricity in Northern Ireland. In line with EU directives, competition has been introduced to the market and all businesses can now switch between suppliers.

Suppliers buy wholesale electricity from generating companies and supply it to consumers like any other product or service. They pay a network operator to deliver the electricity to your business.

Northern Ireland Electricity operates the Northern Ireland electricity network. It ensures the physical delivery of electricity to all customers regardless of their supplier and has a duty to treat all customers equally.

Most customers think NIE is one company but it is actually made up of two separate companies - Northern Ireland Electricity and NIE Energy.

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This leaflet is available in other formats on request



How To Choose and Change Your Electricity Supplier

A guide for business customers

Your Questions Answered





Your Questions Answered



Can I switch supplier now?

Yes. All business customers can now switch electricity supplier.

Why should I consider changing supplier?

You might be able to negotiate a better contract on price and service.

Who are the electricity suppliers in Northern Ireland?

All electricity suppliers must be licensed by NIAUR (the utility regulator) to supply electricity in Northern Ireland. There are eight licensed companies, but only four are currently operating actively. These are:

Company Name	Website Address	Telephone No.
Airtricity*	www.airtricity.com	08456 019 093
Energia*	www.energia.ie	028 9068 5900
ESB Independent Energy*	www.esbie.ie	08453 990 901
NIE Energy*	www.nie.co.uk/home.htm	08457 455 455

* Can supply green energy. Green energy is energy from renewable sources such as wind power.

I want to switch suppliers, what should I do?

Contact the suppliers listed above to get details of what they offer and compare prices. In order to compare these with what you pay now, look at your bills over the past 12 months.

Remember to compare **all** the details – a low price may not be so attractive if it's accompanied by difficult cancellation or termination conditions. Always read the small print and be aware of things like 'get-out' penalties and price changes.

For more information, the Consumer Council has produced a guide called "**Getting the Right Contract**". Download it from the website at www.consumerCouncil.org.uk or call us on **0845 601 6022**.

There is a standard process for switching supplier, which your chosen company will guide you through.

Visit NIAUR's website at www.niaur.gov.uk for more information.

Will it cost me anything to switch?

Businesses who switch to a green energy tariff with another supplier should not pay anything extra if they switch. Northern Ireland Electricity will continue to read your meter and pass this information on to your chosen supplier.

If you switch to a non-green energy tariff, you need to get a special meter fitted that records your consumption details every 30 minutes. Northern Ireland Electricity collects the information remotely every night and this is sent to your supplier so they can bill you. Northern Ireland Electricity will charge your supplier for the cost of installing the new meter and communications equipment. Ask suppliers how much they will charge you to install this meter.

What will I have to pay for my electricity?

Suppliers may negotiate individual terms with each customer rather than selling electricity at a standard price. However, a standard tariff may apply for smaller businesses. The suppliers will provide you with electricity and bill you accordingly. The bill will also include charges for the use of the electricity network.

Will switching supplier affect my supply in any way?

Changing your electricity supplier will not affect your quality of supply. For example, if there is a problem with a power station, the fact that you switched supplier will not affect whether your power goes off. The network operator, Northern Ireland Electricity will continue to collect meter readings for all customers, even though you may have switched to another supplier.

What do I do if there is a power cut?

Northern Ireland Electricity will still be responsible for delivering electricity to businesses and homes in Northern Ireland, regardless of where you buy your electricity. If your electricity goes off or you have problems with the quality of your electricity supply you should contact Northern Ireland Electricity on **08457 643 643**.

How will I be billed?

This depends on your chosen supplier. Suppliers may have different billing arrangements for different customers, so make sure that your chosen supplier's arrangements suit you. You should contact your supplier with any queries you have about your bill.

The new customer registration system – what do I need to know about it?

In Autumn 2006, Northern Ireland Electricity introduced a new customer registration system. All meter points will be allocated a unique Meter Point Reference Number or "MPRN". Your MPRN will be stated on the first electricity bill, which you receive from your supplier after the new arrangements are in place. It is important that you keep this number because it will be required by any new supplier and by Northern Ireland Electricity.