

Synergy's Billing and Payments Code of Practice

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Overview

This code of practice explains how Synergy manages its billing and debt recovery process in accordance with the legislation under which it is licensed to operate. It also explains how Synergy provides assistance to customers experiencing difficulties paying their accounts by the due date.

Section 1 - Billing & Payments

Billing Frequency

Synergy currently bills most residential and small commercial customers every second month and large commercial customers every month.

Liability for Charges

Synergy establishes an account in the name of the person accepting responsibility for payment of the account. While spouse or co-tenant details are recorded for reference, the individual establishing the account is ultimately liable for the payment of the account. Likewise, when a business is owned by an individual (or group of individuals) as opposed to a Company, the individuals are deemed to be jointly and severally liable.

Responsibilities of Owners and Tenants

In situations where Synergy determines that electricity is being consumed at a premise where there is no current account holder, legislation deems that the premise is "owner occupied" and that Synergy is obligated to bill the owner for any electricity consumed.

However, if the owner/agent is able to confirm the occupant's identity and the period of occupation by the tenant by supplying documentation such as a stamped lease agreement, Bond Lodgement form or a Statutory Declaration, Synergy will back bill the occupant.

In order to prevent this situation occurring, Synergy recommends that the premise owner or their agent contacts Synergy after a tenant has vacated the premise to ensure that the account has been finalised and that electricity is no longer being consumed. The electricity supply to the premise will then be disconnected until a new application is received. However, some owners require the electricity to remain connected for security, reticulation purposes. Where electricity has been used after a tenant has finalised their account and no further application has been received, the premise is deemed owner/occupied and the owner is held responsible for the consumption.

Billing Address

Accounts are sent to the account holder at their nominated address. If a postal address has not been given, the account will be sent to the service address to which the electricity is supplied.

When Payment is Due

Customers must ensure that monies owed are received by Synergy on or before the due date as shown on their original Synergy account. If customers are unable to pay the account by the due date, they should contact Synergy on 13 13 53 so that an alternative payment arrangement can be made.

If an account is not paid by its due date, additional fees may be incurred. An overdue notice fee of \$3.80 may be charged for each reminder or disconnection notice sent in relation to an overdue account. Commercial accounts with an individual account balance greater than \$1,000 will be charged interest.

Finalising Your Account.

It is the responsibility of the account holder to notify Synergy five working days prior to vacating a premise to request their account be finalised. The account holder is responsible for all consumption recorded up to the date the account is finalised.

If the final account for a premise remains unpaid, Synergy may:

- Commence further recovery action including listing with Baycorp Advantage (Credit reference Association of Australia); or
- Refer the account to an outside debt collection agency; or
- Commence legal proceedings.

Section 2 - Payment Difficulties

Synergy understands there are times when financial hardship might affect customers. When bills become difficult to pay, the last thing customers want to worry about is how to keep the electricity connected.

Synergy wants all of its customers to have continued access to electricity, and in times of financial difficulty may be able to offer flexible arrangements to help achieve this. If customers are concerned about meeting a payment on time, they should contact Synergy on 13 15 53.

If customers are experiencing genuine financial hardship, Synergy may be able to help you in a number of ways including:

- Arranging to make manageable regular instalments; or
- Deferring the payment date for a short period for some or all of the amount due; or
- Obtaining automatic deductions via the Centrepay facility offered by Centrelink; or
- Referring customers to a registered community organisation that may be able to assist you; or
- Providing information about free and independent financial counselling from a financial counsellor.
- Claim all relevant concessions that the customers are eligible for, including pensioner rebates.

Payment by Instalments

If customers are experiencing difficulties paying their account they can request to "pay-off" the account by instalments.

Synergy is not obliged to offer an instalment plan if:

- In the past two accounts the customer has had one or more previous instalment plans cancelled due to non-payment; or
- Customers have previously been declared bankrupt or have prior accounts in arrears.

Unpaid Accounts

If the electricity is disconnected for non-payment, customers will be charged an additional fee to reconnect the electricity supply.

If the electricity supply is disconnected for non-payment, Synergy will restore the service following:

- Payment of negotiated amounts owed including the reconnection fee, or
- Agreement to a suitable repayment plan.

- A reconnection fee will be added to the next bill.

Entering into an agreed repayment plan and keeping to it will ensure that disconnection does not occur and that additional restoration charges are not incurred.

Away on Holidays

If you will be away on holidays for an extended period of time you can:

- Contact Synergy and have your account forwarded to another address for an agreed period of time; or
- Have your next bill estimated (based on prior consumption) prior to leaving on holidays and pay this amount in order to cover your next bill.

Transferring a debt from one account to another.

If a current account holder has account payments outstanding from a previous premise, Synergy may transfer the amount owing to the customer's current account. If the amount remains unpaid, Synergy may disconnect the electricity supply at the current premise.

Section 3 - Residential Customer Rebates & Concessions

- Holders of Centrelink Health Care Cards & Pensioner Concession Cards are entitled to reduced meter testing fees and rebates on their:
 1. Account establishment fees; and
 2. Supply charge.
- Holders of Seniors Cards are entitled to a rebate on their supply charge.
- Customers with dependant children, who are eligible for supply charge rebates are also entitled to a rebate on a proportion of the energy charge.
- Holders of Veteran Affairs Gold Cards (War Widow, Dependant, Totally and Permanently Incapacitated) and Pensioner Concession Cards are entitled to reduced meter testing fees, as well as rebates on their supply charge and account establishment fees.
- In multiple residences where electricity is supplied through one main Synergy meter, each additional residence pays a supply charge. Eligible customers may claim a rebate on this supply charge.
- Seniors Air conditioning Rebate - [for eligibility please click here.](#)

For further information, please contact our Customer Service Representatives on 13 13 53.

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