

# Consumer Care Policy

Stewart Island Electricity Supply Authority (SIESA)

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## Document Revision

Date	Comments	Actioned by	Endorsed by	Approved by	Approval date
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## Consumer Care Policy

This document is a guide to how we can work together to help you as our consumer produced in accordance with the Electricity Authority's Consumer Care Guidelines. We want you to have a warm and healthy home.

If you are in financial hardship or having trouble paying your bills, let us know how we can support you.

### About this document

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This document is our Consumer Care Policy.

It contains helpful advice, our contact details, and explains how we will:

- act to make sure we have a good relationship with you
- give you the best chance to afford the electricity you need
- help to minimise the harm caused by not having enough electricity or not being able to pay your bill.

It tells you where you can find the extra support you might need and how we can help, including if your health depends on electricity.

This Consumer Care Policy is one of several documents explaining the relationship between you, the consumer, and us, your electricity retailer and supplier. The other documents are our contract for electricity supply and our standard terms and conditions. These are all available online at [sbsbank.co.nz](https://sbsbank.co.nz).

### We're here for you

We're proud to be your electricity retailer and distributor.

We understand that using electricity in your home is very important for the wellbeing of you and your whānau.

As your electricity supplier, it is our job to:

- supply you with the electricity you need to live your life
- make sure you have every opportunity to choose the best pricing plan to meet your needs
- communicate with you clearly and on time
- treat you with care and respect.

### Our promises

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As your electricity retailer, we want to make sure that we:

- understand your situation and are proactive in offering assistance
- work with you collaboratively and constructively to solve problems
- work with you to resolve payment difficulties and, with your permission, can link you to one or more support agencies or social agencies to assist you
- work with you to try to keep your electricity connected if you are having payment difficulties.

If you use electricity from us, we will communicate with you clearly about your rights and the choices you can make, right from the point of joining us or changing premises.

We view the disconnection of electricity for non-payment of bills as a last resort. We will work with you to try and keep your electricity connected and avoid building up debt.

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

## What you can expect from us

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We'll help you by making it as easy as possible to pay for the electricity you use.

We offer standard terms and conditions to all our customers. You agree to these when you become a customer and consume electricity from us. All our contracts meet the Electricity Authority's good contracting principles and minimum terms and conditions.

These terms and conditions are updated from time to time. You can read the latest version online at [siesa.co.nz](http://siesa.co.nz).

You also have access to a complaint resolution through the Utilities Disputes process and the standards set by the Electricity Authority's 'Consumer Care Guidelines'. Please see our Complaints Policy and fact sheet which provides more information on making a complaint. You need to contact us in the first instance if you have complaint, if we do not resolve this to your satisfaction then you can contact:

Utilities Disputes

0800 22 33 40

[info@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz](mailto:info@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz)

[utilitiesdisputes.co.nz](http://utilitiesdisputes.co.nz)

As a responsible electricity retailer, we work within these guidelines, and we are always looking for ways to improve our service to you.

You can find the Consumer Care Guidelines on the Authority's website: [www.ea.govt.nz/consumer-care](http://www.ea.govt.nz/consumer-care)

## What we expect from you

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As an electricity consumer, you have a set of rights and responsibilities.

We ask that you:

- Pay for the electricity you use.
- Reply to messages we send you, so we can know more about your situation and provide additional help if required. We ask you to work with us positively, the more we work together the more we can help you.
- If you are in financial hardship or having trouble paying your bills, let us know how we can help you. If we have worked with you before and what has been proposed no longer suits you please let us know so we can review your needs.

## Commitment to inclusion

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We are an inclusive electricity provider, and we work to make sure that all our customers have access to the support we offer regardless of language, ethnicity, educational achievement, culture, gender, physical and intellectual ability, age, health, income, and wealth.

We offer all our customers a variety of support options, including payment plans, to help make electricity more affordable for you.

## Ways we can help you

### Signing up as a customer

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We want to have you as a customer, so we will help you through the sign-up process if you are joining us for the first time.

To sign up you need to complete our Application for Supply Form which can be accessed online at [www.siesa.co.nz](http://www.siesa.co.nz) or contact us by calling 0800 732 732 or email [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

Becoming a customer means agreeing to us supplying you with electricity, agreeing to our terms and conditions, and choosing the right electricity plan for you.

Before you become a customer, we will ask you questions about yourself and your situation.

We conduct credit checks and will consider this along with all other information you provide to us. In cases of poor credit history, we will provide advice on actions you may take to get electricity from us.

### Our electricity plan

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We offer general tariffs and charges designed around the demographic of SIESA and the unique situation of an independent power supply and distribution structure.

Our plans include a fixed monthly charge as well as a standard rate and nightly rate based on the amount of electricity you use. There are other administrative fees and charges associated with your connection these are all published on our website [www.southlanddc.govt.nz/assets/fees-and-charges/Final-Fees-and-Charges-2022-2023.pdf](http://www.southlanddc.govt.nz/assets/fees-and-charges/Final-Fees-and-Charges-2022-2023.pdf)

Our billing period is monthly. We can also offer you a “smooth pay” option, which averages your electricity bills. This means that you pay regular amounts spread out over a year.

To talk to us about your options and our charges please contact us by calling 0800 732 732 or email [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

### Using electricity smartly

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We want to help you keep your home healthy and warm.

We can offer you advice on how to use your electricity in a way that saves you money. There may be simple changes you can make to your home and the way you use electricity to keep it warm in winter and cool in summer, and keep your energy costs down.

For more energy-saving tips, visit these websites:

- [www.energymate.nz/tips](http://www.energymate.nz/tips)
- [www.genless.govt.nz/living/lower-energy-homes/](http://www.genless.govt.nz/living/lower-energy-homes/)

We also recommend talking with someone in your community who can provide energy efficiency and healthy homes advice. This advice could be over the phone, you can find a group near you here: [www.communityenergy.org.nz](http://www.communityenergy.org.nz)

If you are limiting the amount of electricity you use in order to pay your bills, contact us for help. For example, if you are not using your heater enough during cold weather.

## **Communicating clearly**

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We value our relationship with you. We want to provide you with understandable, timely, clear, and accessible communications.

You can choose the best option for how and when we communicate with you based on your needs.

This includes how you want us to contact you.

Contact us by calling 0800 732 732 or email [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

## **If you need someone to act on your behalf**

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You can ask us to communicate with you using an alternative contact person if you prefer.

An alternative contact could be a family member, friend, support person, or community worker.

Ask this person first. Then, if they agree, you can tell us their name and contact details by calling 0800 732 732 or email [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

Once this is settled, we will work with your alternate contact to make sure that you understand what is happening with your electricity bills and what payments you need to make.

## **Speaking your language**

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If you would like to speak to us in a language other than English, we will try to help.

If we do not speak your language, you have other options.

You can use an alternative contact to talk with us instead; see the above section 'Using an alternative contact'.

Another option is to use a different communications method that suits you. For example, you could receive information from us in writing. See the above section 'Communicating clearly'.

Contact our team to set up an arrangement that suits you: 0800 732 732 or email [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

## Making it easier to pay

### Ways to pay

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You can choose how to pay your bills with us.

You can:

- download and complete a bank direct debit form available at [siesa.co.nz](https://siesa.co.nz)
- pay online by going to our payment portal, select 'Pay it' from the Southland District Council website: [southlanddc.govt.nz](https://southlanddc.govt.nz)
- e-pay via internet or telephone banking
- visit any Southland District Council office to pay over the counter in cash or via EFTPOS or credit card (Mastercard and Visa).

Tailoring one of these options might work better for you, talk to us about what we can do.

### Managing your account

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Managing your electricity account is important to us.

You can access information regarding your account including electricity use and how to make payments by checking your latest invoice or by phoning 0800 732 732 or emailing [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

You can register for emailed electricity invoices on our website: [southlanddc.govt.nz/my-southland/siesa-2/register-for-emailed-rates-notice-3/](https://southlanddc.govt.nz/my-southland/siesa-2/register-for-emailed-rates-notice-3/)

### Linking you with financial mentoring and support organisations

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We can help you if your family or household needs a bit of extra support.

We have relationships with different people and organisations in your community that offer financial mentoring and money advice. They can help you work out how best to pay your bills as well as supporting you with other issues your family or household might have.

If you agree, we can connect you with one of these support people who will help you.

Once contact is made, we will give you some time to talk to the agency and receive help without disconnecting your electricity supply if you are having trouble paying your bills.

We will work with you and your support organisation as a partnership, making sure we all use agreed ways of communicating with each other.

## Our fees and bonds

We occasionally charge additional fees or bonds.

These are only charged when necessary and when we have provided extra services to you. If you ask us to provide an extra service, we will tell you the fee beforehand.

A list of the fees and bonds we charge are published on our website: [siesa.co.nz](https://siesa.co.nz)

Our electricity bond form can also be found using this link. This document discusses the bond terms or you may contact us if you need further information.

## Protecting the health of medically dependent consumers

The health and wellbeing of our consumers is very important to us.

Some people, known as medically dependent consumers or ‘MDCs’ rely on electricity to prevent serious harm to their health. This could be because a health practitioner has supplied or prescribed medical equipment that requires a constant electricity supply.

Contact your doctor (General Practitioner or ‘GP’) and talk through your situation with them if you think that electricity is particularly important for the health of you or someone in your household, or if you are unsure about this.

If you think you, or someone in your household, is medically dependent on electricity, let us know as soon as possible. Your district health board, hospital, GP or health practitioner will give you a “Notice of Potential Medically Dependent Consumer Status (HP notice)”. You will need to let us know about this notice, and you can do this by calling 0800 732 732 or email [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

We may ask you to provide evidence that you or your household member’s MDC status is still the same from time to time. For example, we may ask for a letter from a GP that says that the Notice of Potential MDC Status still applies each year.

We do not disconnect the electricity supply of medically dependent consumers for non-payment. Similarly, we do not offer pre-pay plans for medically dependent customers.

However, despite our best efforts, occasionally the electricity supply is cut because of extreme weather, accidents, or technical problems. In case this happens, you should have an emergency response plan.

An emergency response plan, for example, could be having a fully charged battery available, going to a friend or family member’s house with electricity or, in very serious circumstances, calling an ambulance to be taken to hospital.

For more information on preparing an emergency response plan for your household:

[www.eranz.org.nz/medically-dependant](http://www.eranz.org.nz/medically-dependant)

## Your electricity supply

Each electricity bill you receive from us goes towards paying for generation of electricity on the island, transmission, distribution, and metering, as well as what we do as your retailer.

Normally, we will take care of everything for you. However, from time to time you may receive a notice directly from us about planned electricity outages in your area. This is when they turn off the electricity to your home for a set period of time to do maintenance work or upgrade the wires.

Sometimes things go wrong and there is no power in your home. We can help you work out what the problem is and who is best to fix it - for example, if there is a problem with the electricity supply in your neighbourhood.

PowerNet manage the electricity network on Rakiura/Stewart Island on behalf of SIESA, if you have lost power to your property please call them on 0800 808 587.



## Disconnections for non-payment and reconnections

We work hard to make electricity as affordable for our customers as possible.

We will strive to keep you connected and view disconnections as a last resort.

For extra help paying your electricity bills, contact us by calling 0800 732 732 or email [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

We can refer you to support services and financial mentoring if you are not comfortable talking to us directly.

If you do not pay a bill on its due date, we will attempt to communicate with you directly and/or through the alternative contact you have chosen. Please engage with us so we can support you.

### What communications you can expect from us

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We want you to know what is happening with your account, so we will attempt to communicate with you a number of times about an unpaid bill. Our aim is to let you know about your rights and obligations, and support you to use the electricity you need.

We will attempt to communicate with you using more than one method and using your alternative contact if you have provided us with one. We will also contact you at different times of the day to try to make it easier for you.

If we contact you, please respond so we can make payment arrangements and avoid proceeding to disconnection.

You can expect the following communications from us regarding an unpaid bill:

1. An invoice that tells you the amount due and the due date
2. A reminder notice one week later if the due date is missed
3. Three follow-up attempts over more than a week. We will endeavour to use any other contact persons you have provided us and if contact is successful the next steps will not apply
4. A further notice that will tell you the date on which we will disconnect your electricity
5. A final notice of disconnection.

Note that if we attempt to contact you by phone, we may not leave a voicemail, and we may ring you multiple times to speak with you. We do not use a blocked number.

### Disconnecting your electricity supply for non-payment

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If you do not respond to the communications we send (listed above) and your electricity bills remain unpaid, we may disconnect your electricity supply.

Note that disconnections may not happen in person, so a representative from our company will not necessarily visit your house. You must contact us in response to our reminder notices or disconnection notices to make sure your electricity remains connected.

Important: if you have told us that you or a member of your household is medically dependent on electricity, we will not disconnect your electricity supply for non-payment of bills. Follow the steps listed in the section 'Protecting the health of Medically Dependent Consumers'.

We will not disconnect your electricity at night, immediately before or during a weekend or public holiday, during severe weather events or during a civil emergency.

If your electricity supply is disconnected, you may have it reconnected. This may mean you have to pay a reconnection fee to cover the cost of doing this, it is explained in the section 'Our fees and bonds'. You will not pay a reconnection fee if you are disconnected in error.

To reconnect your electricity supply, contact us calling 0800 732 732 or email [siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:siesa@southlanddc.govt.nz).

## Services that can help you

### Money Talks

MoneyTalks is a free and confidential financial helpline that can connect you with financial mentors and other community services.

[www.moneytalks.co.nz](http://www.moneytalks.co.nz)

0800 345 123

### Citizens Advice Bureau

A nationwide network providing free, confidential, independent information on your rights and how to access the services you need.

[www.cab.org.nz](http://www.cab.org.nz)

0800 367 222

### Work and Income

Work and Income is here to help you financially if you're on a low income or not working.

[www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz)

0800 559 009

### Community Energy Network

Energy efficiency and healthy homes community-based specialists.

[www.communityenergy.org.nz](http://www.communityenergy.org.nz)

### EnergyMate

EnergyMate is a free energy coaching service for households at risk of energy hardship that are struggling to pay their power bill or keep their home warm, delivered by the Electricity Retailers' Association.

[www.energymate.nz/contact](http://www.energymate.nz/contact)

### Utilities Disputes

A free, independent, and fair service that resolves complaints about electricity and gas.

[www.utilitiesdisputes.co.nz](http://www.utilitiesdisputes.co.nz)

0800 22 33 40