



Are my **meter readings** and **billing** affected by onsite generation?

What is this document about?

Since 2010, consumers have increasingly been using the Feed-in Tariff (FIT)¹ scheme to install renewable electricity generating equipment, such as solar Photovoltaic (PV), on their homes.

Some consumers have found that their import supply meter, which measures electricity consumed, is affected by installing onsite generation such as PV panels or micro wind turbines.

Here we explain how your meter and billing might be affected, and who you should contact if you think there is a problem.

How is export electricity from onsite generation measured?

FIT installations with a total installed capacity of 30kW or less are not required to have an export meter in order to receive FIT export payments. Instead the export payments can be deemed². Metering requirements under the scheme can be found on the FIT pages of the Ofgem website <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-programmes/feed-tariff-fit-scheme>

Who is affected?

Some consumers with an older “analogue” meter – the ones with the rotating disc – are finding that the disc sometimes turns backwards, and the numbers on the meter are lower. This happens when you generate more electricity than you are using, and your meter does not have a backstop (which prevents it going backwards).

If this is happening you might be under-billed. You may not be paying for all the electricity you have consumed from the grid. If you do not have an export meter and the import supply meter is not accurately measuring the imported electricity there is no record or way to calculate the correct bill. This means once the metering issue has been discovered, estimates will be used to calculate the bill to rectify the under billing.

Some newer digital meters are configured to add any export electricity to the import readings. This might mean you are paying for more electricity than you are actually consuming.

If your import meter is not accurately measuring the electricity you are consuming, even though you have readings from the generation meter, without an export meter your energy supplier may need to estimate your past bills.

¹ <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-programmes/feed-tariff-fit-scheme/applying-feed-tariff-fit-scheme>

² For FIT installations where export is permitted to be deemed, the Department for Energy and Climate Change determines the percentage of electricity deemed to be exported. Such a determination is published at least 1 month before the beginning of each FIT Year. Generation for micro-Combined Heat and Power, Anaerobic Digestion, solar PV and wind is deemed at 50%. Generation for hydro is deemed at 75%.

What should I do if I am concerned?

If you are concerned that your meter is running backwards you should tell your energy supplier (who might be different from your FIT supplier) as soon as possible.

If you are not seeing the savings you were expecting from the onsite generation, speak to your installer about the savings estimates they predicted. If, once your installer has checked the system, you are still concerned, please contact your energy supplier.

Once the supplier is aware that the meter may not be suitable, they must ensure the meter is appropriate.

This responsibility has been put on suppliers through Schedule 7 of the Electricity Act 1989.

I am not happy with the response from my energy supplier?

Ofgem has introduced new Standards of Conduct (SOC)³ which is an enforceable obligation on suppliers to treat customers fairly. The SOC³ covers three broad areas; behaviour, information and process. The onus will be on suppliers to embed fair treatment of consumers in every level of their organisation so that they behave in an honest, fair, transparent, appropriate and professional manner. Suppliers will also have to provide information that is clear, accurate, complete, appropriate, relevant and not misleading. They will have to ensure that they are easily contactable, act promptly and courteously to put things right. A supplier's customer service arrangements and processes must be complete, thorough, fit for purpose and transparent.

Where a customer is unhappy with the service received from their energy supplier they should complain to the supplier using its formal complaints process. If the customer is unable to resolve the issue with their supplier, they should raise it with the Energy Ombudsman.

Find out more on the Energy Ombudsman website:
<http://www.ombudsman-services.org/energy.html>

I have been advised by my installer that a backward running meter is a benefit of the scheme?

A reduction in a customer's electricity bill caused by a backward running meter is not a benefit of the FIT scheme. Consumers should continue to be metered, and billed for the import electricity they use. Information on the FIT scheme and its benefits can be found on the Energy Saving Trust website. <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generating-energy/Getting-money-back/Feed-In-Tariffs-scheme-FITs>

If you have been misadvised by your installer, you should contact the Renewable Energy Consumer Code (RECC) www.recc.org.uk/consumers/how-to-complain as set out in the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) FIT dispute resolution process⁴.

How will my supplier know how much electricity I have used? Can my supplier back bill me?

If there is no export meter and the import supply meter is not accurate, there is no way to calculate the correct bill. This means once the metering problem has been discovered, estimates are used to calculate the bill to rectify over- or under-billing. Ofgem and energy suppliers have discussed resolving disputes, and what Ofgem expects from suppliers. The SOC³ obligations also apply to the interactions you have with your supplier in relation to back billing. You should ask your supplier to confirm its procedures.

One example of best practice can be found on the Energy UK website, where the estimate is based on previous consumption history, takes into account the type and size of the generation equipment, seasonality, and is made after a review period once the meter has been exchanged. Customers will be treated in a fair and reasonable manner and where possible an agreement reached before the revised bill is issued. <http://www.energy-uk.org.uk/customers/feed-in-tariffs/what-happens-if-my-electricity-meter-behaves-unexpectedly.html>

Smart Meters

The Government's vision is for every home to have a smart electricity and gas meter by 2020. The rollout of smart meters will provide consumers with greater information regarding their use of electricity. The technical specification for these meters⁵ includes the ability to measure exported electricity. As older meters are replaced we expect fewer consumers to be affected by this issue.

For public enquiries contact:

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³ The Standards of Conduct require suppliers to treat their customers fairly. More information on the standards conduct is available from our website: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/simpler-clearer-fairer/fairer-treatment>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispute-resolution-processes-for-feed-in-tariff-complaints>

⁵ These will be the meters that meet the Smart Metering Technical Specification 2 (SMETS 2).