

# Residential Rights and Responsibilities



March 2009

This booklet, which we provide once each year, summarizes our service policies, energy supply choices, and your rights under Public Service Commission (PSC) rules and the Home Energy Fair Practices Act (HEFPA) – Rules (Title 16 of the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations – Part II) based on New York State Public Law. Please take time to read it, and keep it for future reference.

## Your Residential Service

### Residential Customer

A residential customer is a person who is receiving service at a dwelling for his or her own residential use or the residential use of another person.

### Selection of the Most Advantageous Rate

It is your responsibility to select the most advantageous rate classification for your account. Upon request, we are happy to review your energy use and help you determine which rate classification may be best for you.

**Please note:** HEFPA requires that all of the state's utilities provide certain consumer protections and follow specific procedures prior to terminating utility service for customers who fall behind in paying their bills. HEFPA requires that suppliers (also known as energy services companies or ESCOs) provide the same consumer protections before terminating a customer's supply service for non-payment. If you purchase your energy supply from an ESCO you may want to contact that ESCO for more information on HEFPA protections.

### Closing Your RG&E Account

If you want to have your RG&E account turned off because you are moving to another location, contact us. Our billing system will automatically discontinue your energy supply choice, including terminating your enrollment with an ESCO. Contact your ESCO to determine if they have any fees for terminating your supply agreement.

### Access to the Meter

It's important that we access our meter for readings, inspections and maintenance.

- If we are unable to read the meter for 10 months or three billing periods of estimated bills, whichever is greater, we will send you a "no access" notice or contact you requesting that you either provide us with a reading or arrange access to the meter.
- If we cannot gain access, you may be subject to special charges.
- If the meter has not been read in 12 consecutive months or five billing periods, whichever is greater, you or your building owner may be subject to a \$25 charge on your next bill, and all subsequent bills until we gain access.

**Indoor meters** - If you will not be home on a scheduled meter reading date, please let us know in advance. Contact us at **1.800.743.2110** with special access instructions to your property, such as letting us know where a key is kept. Our meter reader will use these instructions to gain access to the meter. We will not enter your property without an adult present unless it is an emergency or if you have granted us permission to do so. If you do not control access to the meter at your home, please help us by asking the building owner to let the meter reader in.

For your protection, every RG&E employee carries a photo identification card. Always ask to see this card before granting entry to your home. Before entering your home, we knock and announce our presence.

## How to Contact Us

### Emergency numbers, available 24 hours a day:

- Natural gas odors or emergencies: 1.800.743.1702
- Electricity interruptions or emergencies: 1.800.743.1701

### Electronic message:

Use our "Write to RG&E" form online at [rge.com](http://rge.com)

### Mail:

- Bill Payment.....RG&E, P.O. Box 5300  
Ithaca, NY 14852-5300
- Customer Relations Center ....RG&E, 89 East Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14649-0001

### Payment arrangements:

1.877.266.3492

### Service and billing questions:

1.800.743.2110

### Hearing and speech impaired:

1.800.962.3293

### Automated Account Services:

1.800.295.7323

# Billing & Payment

## Billing

We issue a monthly bill based on an actual or estimated meter reading based on the amount of energy you have used. Past energy use is the primary factor we consider when preparing an estimated bill.

Whenever a bill based on estimated energy use, it is clearly marked in the meter reading table on page 3 of your bill. The procedure we use to estimate your bill is approved by the PSC. By creating a secure Login ID and password, you can view (and pay) your RG&E bill online. Visit [rgc.com](http://rgc.com) to learn more.

If you prefer, you can provide us with a meter reading on the months we are not reading your meter. For a reminder when a reading is due, we offer a Customer Meter Reading Reminder service. For more information, contact us.

## Bill Payment

We offer several options to pay your bill:

- **Mail** your payment.
- Receive and pay your RG&E bill **online** through RG&E's **e-Bill** service at [rgc.com](http://rgc.com) or through your online billing provider.
- Make a payment **online** through RG&E's **e-Payment** service **or by calling** us at **1.800.743.2110** (you will still receive paper bills).
- Use **electronic funds transfer (EFT)**. With EFT, we'll automatically deduct your payment from your checking account (approximately 23 days after we mail your bill each month). To sign up, complete the form on the back of your bill payment stub.
- Make a credit card payment online or by phone.
- Leave your payment in our **drop box** at one of our eight office locations.
- Bring your payment to a **pay agent** (supermarkets, banks or other businesses). To find the pay agent nearest you, contact us.

**Payment Due Date** - Your payment is due when you receive your bill. Late payment charges are 1.5% a month (18% per year). If you pay by mail, online or at an authorized pay agent, you can avoid a late payment charge by having your payment received by RG&E by the date on the payment stub on page 1 of your bill.

**Budget Billing Plan** - Budget Billing lets you spread your energy costs over 12 months. It does not reduce the cost of the energy you use, but it can even out your monthly bills. For more information, contact us.

## Deposits

RG&E will require a deposit from new customers who are requesting service for less than one year (short term or seasonal) or are asked for proof of identity and fail to provide any. We will require the deposit be paid in full prior to service being turned on. The deposit is waived for new customers who:

- Are on public assistance.
- Receive Supplemental Security Income or additional State payments.
- Are 62 years of age or older and **have not been** shut off for nonpayment in the past six months.

When we require a deposit, the amount is determined by doubling the estimated average monthly bill. For

electricity or natural gas customers whose usage peaks during the heating season, the deposit is determined by doubling the estimated average monthly bill during the heating season.

Deposits requested from current customers may be paid in full within 20 days of our request or in installments for up to 12 months. Deposits are refunded to customers who have paid their bills in full and on time for one year. If you file bankruptcy, you will be required to pay a deposit, per Federal Bankruptcy Law.

## Payment Arrangements

**If you are having difficulty paying your RG&E bill, don't wait, please call us at 1.877.266.3492.**

Together we can work on a solution, including a possible payment agreement.

The agreement will specify a down payment of 15% of the amount you owe or one-half of your average monthly bill, whichever is greater. One-tenth of the balance or one-half of the average monthly bill, whichever is greater, will be due each month. This is in addition to your current charges.

If you cannot meet this agreement, please call us at **1.877.266.3492**. We will work with you to determine if you are eligible for an alternate payment agreement. In making this agreement, we will require documentation of your financial circumstances. Payments may be as low as \$10 a month plus current charges and late payment charges, depending on your financial situation.

## Termination of Service for Nonpayment

The last thing we want to do is terminate your electricity or natural gas service. Before we terminate your RG&E service for nonpayment, we make every effort to help you find a way to pay your RG&E bill. We will refer you to agencies that may be able to assist you. If you are having difficulty paying your RG&E bill, please call us at **1.877.266.3492**.

Before we terminate your service for nonpayment, we will send you a final termination notice. We do not send a final termination notice until a bill is past due.

We will send you a payment agreement at least 10 days prior to the termination date on your final termination notice if you are not presently on a payment agreement. If a payment agreement has not been made with us or you are not up-to-date on your present payment agreement, we have the right to turn off your electricity or natural gas service.

We may terminate service only between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Thursday. We will not terminate service on a day when our offices or the PSC offices are closed or the day before a holiday, on a holiday, or during a two-week period that includes Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

If your service has been terminated and you cannot reach an agreement with our representative to reconnect service, you may ask to speak with a supervisor. If you still are not satisfied, you may call RG&E Customer Assistance at **1.800.743.1150**. If an agreement cannot be reached you may call the PSC Emergency Hotline at **1.800.342.3355**, weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

# Special Services

## **Cold Weather Protections - (In effect between November 1 and April 15)**

Heat-related service is vital to maintain your comfort and safety during the winter months. You have heat-related service if RG&E delivers the electricity or natural gas used to heat your home or if RG&E delivers the electricity needed to operate your primary heating system. Under any of these circumstances, we will not terminate your electricity or natural gas service between November 1 and April 15 unless we have made a diligent effort to personally contact you or an adult member of your household and have determined that no serious impairment to health or safety would result if the service is terminated.

## **Termination of Service During Cold Weather Months - (In effect between November 1 and April 15)**

We will try to contact you regarding payment arrangements at least 72 hours before termination of RG&E service. If our efforts to contact you by telephone during the day and evening hours are unsuccessful, we will send a representative to your home. If we are unable to contact you, your service may be terminated. If, after meeting with you, we find that a service termination might cause serious harm, we will ask the Department of Social Services (DSS) to look into the matter. We will continue your service while DSS reviews your situation.

If you live in a multiple dwelling where the meter serves more than one unit, we will not terminate your heat-related service without giving you written notice at least 30 days in advance during winter heating season (18 days in advance during the remainder of the year). If it is determined that any tenant has a medical problem that would be worsened by terminating the heat-related service, we will continue service and refer him or her to DSS.

If you have any questions on the above protections, please call **1.877.266.3492**.

## **Turn Off of Service for Unsafe Conditions**

We may turn off service any time we find a serious safety or technical problem. After the problem is corrected, we will turn service on as soon as possible.

## **Hardship Protections**

When you are faced with a hardship that threatens your health or safety, we may refer you to the Department of Social Services (DSS) and to other resources and services. To ensure that you receive all of the protections available to you, return the form found on the bottom of page 6 or contact us.

**Medical Emergency** - If you or a member of your household has a serious medical condition and you receive a service termination notice, we will continue your electricity and/or natural gas service for 30 days when you file a **medical certificate with us from your doctor or local board of health**. To renew the certificate and continue service after the 30 days are up, have your doctor or local board of health provide in writing why the service is still needed. They must submit this on their stationery and **include their medical identification number**. As long as you can document that you are unable to make a payment, we will not terminate your service during your medical emergency. However, **you are still responsible for payment of your RG&E bills**.

**Critical Customer Care Program** - If you need RG&E service to operate life-sustaining equipment, it is your responsibility to notify us. We will tag your RG&E meter, code your account and make every effort to contact you during a service interruption.

**Special Identification Program** - If everyone in your household (including yourself) is either blind or disabled, 18 years of age or under, or at least 62 years of age or older, we will attempt to contact you by phone or in person at least 72 hours before termination of service to work out a payment agreement.

If a payment agreement cannot be reached, we will notify DSS and will continue your electricity or natural gas service while DSS reviews your situation. If service has been terminated, we will attempt to contact you again within 10 days to offer a plan to reconnect service.

**Third Party Notification Service** - If circumstances make it difficult for you to keep track of your RG&E account, you can designate a friend, relative or agency to receive a notice from us whenever your service is at risk of being terminated. The person or agency is not responsible for paying your bill, but can work with us on your behalf. To sign up for our Third Party Notification Service, contact us.

**If you are having difficulty paying your RG&E bill, don't wait, contact us immediately at 1.877.266.3492, and together we can work on a solution.**

**► To ensure you receive these special protections, contact us at 1.877.266.3492 or complete and return the form found on page 6. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.**

# Customer Rights & Responsibilities

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## Reconnection of Service

We charge to reconnect service during and after normal business hours. Our fees are published at [rge.com](http://rge.com) in our tariffs.

### If your RG&E service has been terminated for nonpayment, we will reconnect it within 24 hours when:

- You have paid the amount due, or signed a payment agreement and made a down payment if you are not now on a payment agreement.
- Your doctor confirms a medical emergency (see Hardship Protections on page 3).
- We receive notice of payment from a social service agency that is helping you.
- The PSC directs us to reconnect the service.

## Tenants

By law, tenants are required to pay only for the electricity or natural gas they use.

Sometimes a tenant's electricity or natural gas meter also registers electricity or natural gas used outside the tenant's dwelling. This is called a "shared meter." In those cases, tenants are only required to pay for the energy they use in their dwellings.

In situations where a shared meter exists, the landlord must either:

- If permitted by New York State's Shared Meter Law, enter into an agreement with the tenant to compensate the tenant for any energy the tenant did not use.
- Place the dwelling unit's electricity or natural gas account in the landlord's name.

If you suspect your electricity or natural gas meter is registering service not used in your dwelling, call us at **1.800.743.2110**, and we will investigate. When the investigation is complete, we will send you a written summary of our findings.

If you live in an apartment where your landlord fails to pay the electricity or natural gas bills for which he or she is responsible, you may be able to keep the service on if you can join with other tenants to pay the bill. To do this, you would only have to pay the current bill. That amount can then be deducted from the utility charges in your rent.

If your landlord has not paid his or her utility bill, RG&E will post notices throughout the building to inform you. From November 1 through April 15, we will also send notices to each tenant or dwelling unit at least 30 days before the service will be terminated. The rest of the year, we will send notices at least 18 days before service will be terminated. This notice will tell you whom to contact to resolve the problem.

## Complaint Handling Procedure

Whether you write, contact us by phone or send an e-mail to us, we will address your questions. If you feel our representative has not adequately addressed your concern, please ask to speak with a supervisor.

If after talking with a supervisor you are still not satisfied, you can call RG&E Customer Assistance at **1.800.743.1150**.

If your concern remains unresolved, you can:

- Write to the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC), Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223.
- Call the PSC's toll-free Helpline at **1.800.342.3377**, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Visit [askpsc.com](http://askpsc.com).

If your complaint involves an RG&E bill, you will not be asked to pay the disputed portion of the bill while the matter is being reviewed by the PSC. However, the remaining balance of the bill in question and any future bills should be paid when due.

## Power Disturbances

All electrical systems are subject to occasional, uncontrollable events, such as severe weather conditions or accidents involving utility poles or wires. These events can result in electrical disturbances such as high and low voltage conditions or power spikes that can damage or affect the operation of your electrical equipment including appliances. Please be aware that it is your responsibility to protect your equipment against the possible effects of power disturbances.

## Authorization

You can designate someone (a relative, roommate, caretaker, business agent, etc.) to have access to your account information and contact RG&E on your behalf. The authorized person will be able to make decisions about your service. They would not be responsible for any costs incurred on your account. To designate an authorized person, contact us.

## For Emergencies, Call RG&E. Need Service? Call a Contractor.

For natural gas or carbon monoxide emergencies, call RG&E anytime at **1.800.743.1702**. For all *non-emergency* natural gas services (furnace problems, low or no heat; stove and/or oven problems; second opinions on recommended work; safety inspections; dryer problems; no hot water; heating, air conditioning or appliance repair), contact trained, certified equipment and appliance professionals who can help you.

Qualified, licensed plumbers, heating contractors or appliance repair professionals should install natural gas lines, change appliance connectors or check service lines running from the natural gas meter to your appliances. This is the responsibility of the property owner along with the maintenance and repair of these lines in order to ensure safe/proper operation.

# Energy Supply

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## Contact Information

If you do not purchase your energy supply from RG&E, contact your supplier (also known as an energy services company or ESCO) for questions regarding your energy **supply**. Contact RG&E if you have questions regarding your **delivery** services. You can select an ESCO at any time for your energy supply.

## Electricity Supply Choices

**New/Moving Customers** - If you are a new customer or a current customer moving within our service area, you will need to make an electricity supply choice within 30 days of starting service with us. Your account will initially be billed at the *RG&E Variable Price Option* unless you make another selection. Your supply choice will take effect on the day you make your selection and continue through December 31, 2009 unless you choose to switch your electricity supplier. If you choose an ESCO, you will be billed at the ESCO's supply price beginning with your next actual or estimated meter reading that occurs 15 days after RG&E receives a valid enrollment from your ESCO. You will continue to pay RG&E for your delivery charges.

**Existing Customers** - If you are currently an RG&E customer, you can change your electricity supply choice anytime through December 31, 2009. Please note that you can switch directly from the *Fixed Price Option* to the *ESCO Option with Supply Adjustment*. You can switch directly from the *Variable Price Option* to the *ESCO Price Option*, or vice versa.

## Natural Gas Supply Choices

**New/Moving and Existing Customers** - You can choose an ESCO or RG&E to provide your natural gas supply at any time.

## Enrolling With an ESCO

- **Step 1: Obtain an ESCO List** - Participating ESCOs must meet certain requirements set forth by the PSC, New York Independent System Operator (NYISO)\* and RG&E. For the most current list of ESCOs, visit [rge.com](http://rge.com) or call **1.800.743.2110**.
- **Step 2: Compare Prices and Services**
- **Step 3. Notify the ESCO of Your Choice** - Your ESCO must then contact RG&E to enroll your account. Your ESCO will need your Point of Delivery (PoD) ID number, which can be found on page 3 of your bill.

\* For electricity ESCOs only.

## Energy Supply Start Date

Once RG&E receives your enrollment from your ESCO, your start date will be confirmed by RG&E in writing.

Your start date to receive electricity and/or natural gas supply from your ESCO is the date of your next scheduled actual or estimated meter reading that occurs 15 days after RG&E receives a valid enrollment from your ESCO. If you want to begin receiving electricity and/or natural gas supply from your ESCO earlier than your start date, you or your ESCO can notify RG&E to request a special meter reading (a \$20 fee will apply).

**Natural Gas Supply** - Your start date for natural gas supply is the first day of the month after we receive your enrollment from your ESCO.

## Billing

Once RG&E processes your ESCO enrollment, you will receive a bill for the energy supply received from RG&E up to the date of your actual or estimated meter reading.

- **Single Bill Option** - If your ESCO offered a consolidated (single) bill option, your ESCO supply and RG&E delivery charges will be included in your RG&E bill. Continue to pay RG&E for the total amount due (RG&E delivery and transition charges and ESCO supply charge).
- **Two Bill Option** - If your ESCO's charges do not appear on your RG&E bill, your ESCO will be billing you separately for energy supply, and you will pay your ESCO directly. Continue to pay RG&E directly for your delivery and transition charges.

# Energy Supply (continued)

## Consumer Protections

You have consumer protections when you choose an ESCO. Check with your ESCO about any consumer protections that might apply to you.

**ESCO Terms and Conditions - Disclosure Statement** - Your ESCO is required to provide you with a statement of the terms and conditions and your rights and responsibilities prior to you making a commitment to the ESCO. Your commitment to the ESCO will not be considered final until three business days after your receipt of the ESCO's disclosure statement. The statement must inform you about the intent of the ESCO to obtain your billing, usage and payment history information from RG&E.

**Confidentiality of Your Account Information** - With your authorization, an ESCO may obtain your billing and usage history from RG&E. To receive your payment history, the ESCO must provide RG&E with your authorization. If you do not want RG&E to release *any or all* account information, please contact us at [rge.com](http://rge.com) or call **1.800.743.2110**.

**Unauthorized Switches (Slamming Prevention)** - Slamming is the illegal practice of switching a customer's energy supply service without the customer's consent. Before you receive your energy supply from an ESCO, RG&E will send you a letter confirming your choice of ESCO. If you did not authorize the switch, contact us immediately at **1.800.743.2110**.

**Provider of Last Resort** - If, for any reason, your ESCO ceases to provide you with energy supply services, RG&E will automatically provide you with electricity or natural gas supply. Your service will not be interrupted.

## Complaint Handling Procedures

If your complaint is with an ESCO:

- Contact your ESCO directly.
- If your complaint remains unresolved or you are still not satisfied, you can contact the PSC toll-free at **1.800.342.3377** or [askpsc.com](http://askpsc.com).
- If you are still not satisfied after talking to the PSC, you may call the New York State Attorney General's Office at **1.800.771.7755**.

If your complaint is with RG&E's delivery service, refer to page 4.

**Para recibir esta información en español favor de llamar al 1.800.743.2110.**

**Please check any of the statements below that apply to you, complete the form and mail it to: RG&E Customer Relations Center, 89 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14649-0001. This will ensure that you are afforded all protections to which you are entitled.**

I am at least 62 years old or disabled or blind and live alone.

Everyone in my household is at least 62 years old or blind or disabled or 18 years old or younger.

I or someone in my household uses the following life-sustaining equipment: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me more information about RG&E's special services that are described on page 3.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

RG&E account number (11 digits): \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

[www.rge.com](http://www.rge.com)



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