

High Bill Web Document – Direct Energy



Overview:

Due to increased usage during the winter months, we're offering our support to our customers to help you better understand your bill charges. Please read below for more details and information on high bills and consumption.



High Bill Drivers:

- **Weather** – December and January are historically the coldest months in Alberta, with January being the coldest of all. Consumers use the most natural gas and/or electricity during these two months, with average January usage being 20 GJ/month. A true comparison should be done with the same month of a prior year or one month prior instead of a month at a different time of year.
- **Changes in the home** – If an increase in usage is noticed, this could be due to a change in the home causing an increase in usage, such as keeping the thermostat at a higher temperature, or not keeping up with furnace maintenance and filter changes. The addition of a portable electric heater or electric fireplace will greatly increase usage.
*Did you know that one 1000 watt space heater can increase a bill by \$25 if used just 8 hours a day?
- **Contract** – If your contract has renewed recently, the rate per kWh or GJ may be higher than it previously was in prior months, which can make an impact on the total charges. A comparison needs to be done if this is noticed.
- **Carbon Levy** – The carbon levy is a Government of Alberta charge that started appearing on all residential and commercial natural gas invoices effective January 1st, 2017 and is based solely on your consumption.



1. Q: How did the new Carbon Levy charge affect my bill?

A: The Carbon Levy took effect on January 1, 2017 and is a charge assessed by the Government of Alberta. It is based on your natural gas consumption at a rate of \$1.011/GJ. For more information on the Carbon Levy please visit: www.climate.alberta.ca.

2. Q: Why has my bill increased so much from last month?

A: A typical residential customer during the month of January consumes 20 GJ per month. The extraordinary cold spell (Jan. 1- Jan. 13) coupled with more time spent at home during the holiday season could typically contribute to higher usage (above the average of 20 GJ/month).

Below you'll find more information on tips and ways to reduce your usage.

3. Q: I can't afford this bill. Are there any options for me, so I won't fall behind on my balance?

A: Absolutely! Direct Energy supports our customers and offers several ways to assist with managing your balance. We offer:

- Payment Arrangements (Online account management / automated system)
- Payment extension (Online account management / automated system)
- In the future, you might consider our Budget Billing Plan as well

Please visit www.directenergy.com/alberta/customer-support/bill-payment-options to explore more details.

4. Q: How can I lower my consumption?

A: We have several energy efficiency tips we can share with you. Visit the Direct Energy website where you can find energy efficiency tips for all seasons, as well as ideas on how to improve your home's energy efficiency. Here is our website:

www.directenergy.com/learning-center/energy-efficiency

Your distributor ATCO also has some good information on their website at:

www.atcoenergysense.com/For-Homeowners/Frequently-Asked-Questions

5. Q: Why are the distributor charges so high?

A: ATCO Gas' costs for transmission and delivery (T&D) have both a fixed and variable component, based on usage and are the largest portion of a customer's bill. In the winter, they can be up to 65% of the total cost. The Carbon Levy of \$1.011/GJ is also identified in the T&D section of the bill.

6. Q: I'm on the budget billing plan and my bill has increased. Will this continue to happen?

A: Budget billing is a great plan to help your bill amount remain consistent each month. There are a few possible reasons which may cause a change in your budget amount. Please keep in mind the following examples that may impact your budget billing amount:

- Past due payments / or payment not yet received
- Budget Billing settlement month
- A significant change in customer's usage may cause a quarterly review



Energy Efficiency Tips for customers with high usage

We have new products that could help our Alberta customers to reduce their energy consumption. We now offer **Hive**, which gives customers Smart Home Capabilities! Please visit www.directenergy.com/alberta and click on FAQs, then click on HIVE for more information.

Direct Energy also offers a Home Services company located in select areas of Alberta who can assist our energy customers with their furnace needs. Please visit www.directenergy.com/alberta/home-services for more details.

Lower your thermostat	We recommend starting with 2 °C (about 4 °F). You could save as much as 4% on your heating bill with this step.
Throw down a rug	You'll not only help insulate your floors, but you'll cut down on the noise too.
Install a furnace filter alarm	This will let you know when it is time to change your filters.
Check your furnace filter	Do this monthly during the winter months, and replace it if it's dirty. Keeping your furnace properly maintained will reduce energy consumption and could save you up to 5 percent on your heating costs.
Give your vents some space	Keep supply and return air vents clear of furniture and appliances so your furnace can work more efficiently.
Don't heat unnecessary places	Avoid heating areas of your home that are not insulated, such as a garage, crawlspaces, attic, or storage sheds.
Program the thermostat	You could save up to 10 percent on your heating bill by programming your thermostat to be at a lower temperature at night and after you leave for work.
Check the door seals	To check if a door provides good insulation, place your hand against it from the inside. If it feels cooler than the inside walls, it might be time to install a door that's better insulated.
Try a furnace tune-up	A tune-up on your furnace can save 3 to 10 percent on your next heating bill. Don't forget to clean or replace your furnace filter regularly.
Check out your attic	To find out if you have enough attic insulation, measure its thickness. If there is less than R-22 (7 inches [17.78 cm] of fiberglass / rock wool or 6 inches [15.24 cm] of cellulose) you could probably benefit by adding more. And while you're up there, consider installing some roof vents and inlets to improve ventilation.
Protect your windows	Clear plastic sheeting on your windows can add more insulation and reduce icy drafts with minimal effort and minimal cost.

Heat your home responsibly	Cranking up the heat to warm the house quickly doesn't work. The house will warm up at the same rate, regardless of the temperature setting.
Fix your chimney	Be sure your damper is closed when the fireplace is not in use. Check the seal on the flue damper and make it as snug as possible. Consider installing tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warm air into the room. When you do use the fireplace, reduce heat loss by opening dampers in the bottom of the firebox (if provided) or open the nearest window slightly and close the doors into the room. Lower your thermostat setting to between 10 - 13 °C (50 - 55 °F).
Enjoy the sun	Open the drapes or blinds on sunny days to benefit from the "free" heat. Keep your south-facing windows squeaky clean to let the light through. Remember to close the drapes or blinds when the sun sets.
Try a humidifier	Adding a humidifier to your heating system may allow you to turn your thermostat down and be comfortable at lower temperatures. Also, aquariums and houseplants can add humidity too.
Install energy-saving technology	Canadians rely heavily on electrical lighting during the long, dark winter nights. Help conserve energy by installing automatic timers, motion sensors, dimmers, and solar cells at your house.
Switch to better light bulbs	Halogen lighting uses up to 40 percent less energy than traditional bulbs, and it's also excellent for gardens and pathways. We also recommend LED bulbs instead of the old-school incandescent ones.
Turn off the lights	It costs approximately \$2.55 per year to light one room for one hour each day. Remember to switch off the lights when you leave a room and you'll save money.
Close the garage door	During the winter months, don't forget to keep the garage door tightly closed as often as possible. In doing so, you'll retain warmer air against the garage-side wall of the house, and it will act as a buffer against the colder outdoor air.