

# High Bill Web Document – DERS



## Overview:

Due to increased natural gas use 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?
- **Changes in natural gas price:** In response to commodity prices, the January regulated rate for natural gas, as approved by the Alberta Utilities Commission, increased to \$3.745 GJ from \$2.579 GJ in December
- **Carbon Levy** – The carbon levy is a Government of Alberta charge that started appearing on all residential and commercial natural gas invoices effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 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](http://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 would typically contribute to higher usage (above the average of 20 GJ/month). So increased usage, a higher monthly natural gas price, variable transmission and distribution costs and the carbon levy could all factor into your higher monthly bill.

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 can offer you:

- 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.directenergyregulatedservices.com](http://www.directenergyregulatedservices.com) and click on 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 Regulated Services 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.directenergyregulatedservices.com](http://www.directenergyregulatedservices.com) and click on **Get To Know DERS** to find out **How to Save**. Your distributor ATCO also has some good information on their website at: [www.atcoenergysense.com/For-Homeowners/Frequently-Asked-Questions](http://www.atcoenergysense.com/For-Homeowners/Frequently-Asked-Questions)

**5. Q: Why are the distributor charges as much as my current usage?**

**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 budget billing 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 your usage may cause a quarterly review



## Energy Efficiency Tips for customers with high usage

<b>Lower your thermostat</b>	We recommend starting with 2 °C (about 4 °F). You could save as much as 4% on your heating bill with this step.
<b>Throw down a rug</b>	You'll not only help insulate your floors, but you'll cut down on the noise too.
<b>Install a furnace filter alarm</b>	This will let you know when it is time to change your filters.

<b>Check your furnace filter</b>	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.
<b>Give your vents some space</b>	Keep supply and return air vents clear of furniture and appliances so your furnace can work more efficiently.
<b>Don't heat unnecessary places</b>	Avoid heating areas of your home that are not insulated, such as a garage, crawlspaces, attic, or storage sheds.
<b>Program the thermostat</b>	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.
<b>Check the door seals</b>	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.
<b>Try a furnace tune-up</b>	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.
<b>Check out your attic</b>	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.
<b>Protect your windows</b>	Clear plastic sheeting on your windows can add more insulation and reduce icy drafts with minimal effort and minimal cost.
<b>Heat your home responsibly</b>	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.
<b>Fix your chimney</b>	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).
<b>Enjoy the sun</b>	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.
<b>Try a humidifier</b>	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.
<b>Install energy-saving technology</b>	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.

<b>Switch to better light bulbs</b>	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.
<b>Turn off the lights</b>	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.
<b>Close the garage door</b>	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.