



Common hot water systems

What is a common hot water system?

A common hot water system is a centralised hot water service that supplies hot water to all units in a building. They are used in place of individual hot water systems.

Water boilers for common hot water systems can hold thousands of litres of water and are generally heated by gas, although electric boilers exist in some older developments. Pipes from the boilers deliver hot water to each unit in the building and each unit has its own meter that measures the amount of hot water used.

Who bills me for my hot water usage?

Common hot water systems are not owned by the local gas distributor. They are usually owned by the strata corporation, or a third party that manages the hot water service for the building.

Historically, Jemena Gas Networks (the local gas distributor) has taken responsibility for hot water meters installed at each individual residence in a building. If the distributor owns the hot water meter, the customer is charged for the megajoules (MJ) of gas used to heat the water rather than the amount of hot water (litres) recorded by the meter. If you receive a hot water bill based on the amount of gas used, you are still covered by all the energy specific consumer protections contained in the National Energy Customer Framework (NECF).

There has been a growth in the number of hot water embedded networks where metering is managed by third parties, and customers are charged for the amount of hot water used (litres), rather than how much gas used to heat the water. If you receive a hot water bill that contains charges for the litres of hot water used, you do not have the same consumer protections that apply to the supply of electricity and gas.

The information on this factsheet focuses on customers that are charged for the amount of gas (MJ) used to heat the water supplied to the home.

How is my bill calculated?

- You are billed for the energy in megajoules (MJ) used to heat the amount of hot water (measured in decalitres) you used. One decalitre equals 10 litres.
- A conversion factor is calculated to determine how much energy in MJ was used to heat the total amount of hot water used in the building. The conversion factor equals the average MJ of gas (that is the amount of energy used) to heat each decalitre of hot water used in your building for the billing period.
- Each unit's hot water meter records the amount of hot water used. The usage recorded by your hot water meter is then multiplied by the conversion factor and you are charged for energy in MJ used to heat the amount of hot water you used.
- The amount of hot water (decalitres) you used is calculated by subtracting the start read from the end read for the billing period. The metered units are then multiplied by the conversion factor to calculate the MJ of energy used.



Gas providers present usage calculations differently on bills and some refer to the conversion factor as the 'pressure factor'



How do I read my meter?

To read your meter, read all the black numbers from left to right and the first two red numbers.

New meters may have seven dials. The last dial only records partial litres and is not taken into account for billing purposes.

The meter reading here is 105161.





What happens if my meter can't be read?

Hot water meters are often located inside a unit and can be difficult for a meter reader to access.

Some meters can be read using a device called a meter data logger (MDL) which transmits the meter readings from the internal hot water meter in each unit to a panel elsewhere in the building. This means the meter reader

does not need to enter each unit to take a reading from the meter.

If the hot water meter is inside your unit and there is no MDL, you may receive estimated bills. You can contact your gas retailer to provide a self-read or to arrange access to your meter so an actual read can be taken.

Why is my conversion factor high?

The following conditions may lead to a high conversion factor.

- **The number of people using the system:** If there is a high rate of vacancy in the building the system will still consume gas to maintain the predetermined temperature. If less hot water is used than the system was designed for, more energy is used to heat each litre of water.
- **The efficiency of the hot water system:** A system that is not well maintained will need greater amounts of gas to heat water to the predetermined temperature.
- **The temperature settings:** The higher the temperature is set the more gas is needed to heat the water to that temperature.
- **The condition and insulation of the pipework:** Water cools down if it is stationary in the pipework and the pipework is not well insulated.
- **The distance from the hot water system:** Water in the pipes will cool over time resulting in cold water passing through the tap before hot water starts flowing. This is all recorded as hot water usage through your hot water meter.
- For more information on **high bills**, see our factsheets at ewon.com.au/factsheets.

Why is my bill high?

The following conditions may lead to a high bill.

- Does your bill include previous amounts you haven't paid?
- Did the price increase?
- Is the billing period longer than normal?
- Is there a dripping hot water tap in your home?
- Have you used more hot water than you usually do?
- Has your bill been estimated?
- Is the conversion factor high?

Most high conversion factors are due to the hot water system not operating efficiently. The Body Corporate, building owner or NSW Housing manager is responsible for maintaining an efficient hot water system. Your complaint should be referred to them.



Make a complaint or enquiry

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| Freecall | 1800 246 545* Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm |
| Freefax | 1800 812 291 |
| Freepost | Reply Paid 86550 Sydney South NSW 1234 |
| Interpreter | 131 450 |
| TTY/Voice | 133 677 |
| Online | ewon.com.au |
| In person | Level 11, 133 Castlereagh St, Sydney, NSW 2000 |

* If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and we will call you back.