

**Prepayment meter**

Prepayment meters are special meters which only provide fuel after it is paid for. These meters are operated by tokens, cards or keys that have to be either bought or 'topped up'. A prepayment meter can help prevent any debt building up on an account. It also enables repayment of an outstanding debt.

If a consumer has a fuel debt they should discuss an affordable level of repayment with their supplier before the meter is set. If there is a problem, contact the fuel company first. If the issue is not resolved, Citizens Advice (formerly Consumer Direct) can be asked to help. Contact them on **08454 040506**.

There is generally an emergency temporary credit facility on the meter in case the supply runs out.

**Advantages:**

- ✓ The consumer pays for fuel as it is used
- ✓ Enabling them to budget effectively to suit their means
- ✓ There are no large bills to worry about
- ✓ Meters can be set to recover debt gradually.

**Disadvantages:**

- ☒ The customer may have to visit specific outlets to make payments, but some suppliers can offer the facility to top up at home via the internet
- ☒ Consumers need to understand how standing charges and debts are collected through the meter so that they know the available credit for ongoing use after topping up
- ☒ Potential self-disconnection - electricity or gas may cut off because consumers are unable to make payments, although if credit runs out there is limited emergency credit before supply is disconnected. (It's also worth noting that some suppliers offer key-operated prepayment meters with a 'friendly non-disconnect period'. This type of meter won't disconnect a supply at a time when shops are unlikely to be open, for example overnight).

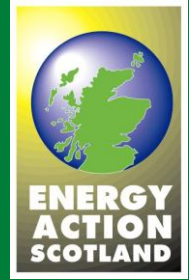
**Topping-Up:**

PayPoint ([www.paypoint.co.uk](http://www.paypoint.co.uk)) and Payzone ([www.payzone.co.uk](http://www.payzone.co.uk)) payment outlets for topping up are usually located in local newsagents, shops and petrol stations. Card and keys can usually be topped up at most Post Offices ([www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk)).

Customers should only top up at official outlets and must beware of scams, including doorstep sales. See: [www.top-upsafe.com](http://www.top-upsafe.com)

**This method generally suits:**

- ✓ People who don't find accessing charging outlets difficult
- ✓ Customers who want to either avoid fuel debt or manage an existing debt.



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*"Working to  
end fuel  
poverty and  
achieve  
warm, dry  
homes for  
all."*