



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

METER REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME: INSTALLATION OF NEW PREPAID METERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Last updated: July 2026

1. Is it mandatory?

Yes. Many credit and prepaid meters are more than 30 years old and need to be replaced to avoid inaccurate readings. The programme is being rolled out free-of-charge to customers with City meters in City supply areas.

The programme is compulsory and is supported by National regulatory standards (NRS 057: 2009 / SANS 474:2009) and the City of Cape Town's Electricity By-law, 2010. All City meters must be properly maintained and proactively replaced prior to the end of their lifespan. It is important to note that all prepaid meters in the City's supply areas are City of Cape Town property. Customers who refuse to have their meters replaced will unfortunately have to be disconnected and will be liable to pay a reconnection fee once the meter has been changed.

There are four active metering-related programmes under way in City-supplied areas:

- I. **Residential Meter Replacement Programme (MRP):** compulsory free-of-charge replacement of old credit meters and some old prepaid meters with new technology meters. MRP teams go from area-to-area to replace the required meters, it could be credit meters or old prepaid meters. Customers may expect to find a letter-drop in their postbox with a number to phone to make an appointment for teams to access the property to replace the meter. Consumers are also contacted via email and SMS to arrange appointments, after which they receive an SMS containing the notification number. ***The contractor only visits premises where a notice was previously dropped or where an appointment has been arranged with the consumer telephonically, via email or SMS. All details are contained in the letter-drop.***
- II. **Commercial: Small Power Users meter replacements up to 100A:** Customers may expect to find a letter-drop in their postbox with a number to phone to make an appointment for teams to access the property to replace the meter. Consumers are also contacted via email and WhatsApp to arrange appointments, after which they receive an SMS containing the notification number. ***The contractor only visits premises where a notice was previously dropped or where an appointment has been arranged with the consumer telephonically, via email or WhatsApp.***
- III. **Residential and commercial small-scale embedded generation (SSEG):**
- IV. **Meter integrity inspection:** The City's meter protection teams conduct meter integrity inspections in instances where a customer C3 notification has been logged for a faulty meter or where they question usage data or where City consumption data shows potential irregularities that require on site investigation and potential meter testing.

This inspection is also done to investigate potential meter tampering which is a form of electricity theft. Through bypassing the meter units are thus not measured and not paid for. This impacts all customers as these losses through theft affect the price of electricity for all. Often customers who have been found guilty of tampering will have a double impact of having to pay a tampering fine in accordance with the law and also, having to pay for actual energy usage – no longer bypassed and not paid for. This leads to high costs for the consumer.

2. Is the cost of electricity more expensive through prepaid meters?

This is a myth. Electricity is not more expensive via a prepaid electricity meter and customers do not get fewer units for the same price on prepaid. A prepaid meter merely measures the usage and does not consume the customer's electricity in the meter.

A prepaid meter allows residents to limit their usage as far as possible and to manage their household expenditure. Qualifying residents may also be able to access support and may qualify to be placed on the Lifeline tariff once a prepaid meter is installed.

The cost per kWh is the same for both prepaid and credit meters. The only difference is that prepaid tokens reflect a VAT-inclusive cost per kWh whereas the municipal bill for a credit meter will show the energy charges as an ex-VAT cost (VAT is added at the end of the bill).

Prepaid only measure electricity usage and does not consume the customer's electricity in the meter. There is no difference in the unit price of electricity between a credit and prepaid meter. Electricity meters are regulated in accordance with SANS 474 South African Metering Grid-code.

In addition to complying with the minimum requirements of the grid code each meter installed by the City is calibrated (not adjusted but checked to be within specification) in a laboratory with standards that are traceable to the national energy standard. It is in the interest of our electricity customers to ensure that each meter we install is in accordance with specification.

3. Will customers be able to recharge tokens with the new meters even if all units have been used up to 0?

Yes. If not, it could indicate that there is a problem at the supply point, not the meter. However, this is the exception rather than the norm and less than 10% of the hundreds of thousands of meters installed may have an issue at the supply point. It is not normal for any new prepaid meter to require a reset token when the meter goes to zero units. This points to a fault at the supply point which requires investigation from our Revenue protection teams. To emphasise: **it is not the meter that is faulty, but a fault at the supply point that requires attention.**

4. What to do if meter shows a blank screen?

First reset it, by pressing in the hashtag # key for 10 seconds. If it does not work, please phone the City's Call Centre to log a request as it might be a supply issue and not a meter issue.

5. Is the meter replacement free?

As part of the project, the conversion to the new prepaid meter is entirely free of charge provided customers contact the contractor while they are busy in the area, or the City teams to ensure that the customer is on the replacement schedule. To ensure that you are on our target list, please submit a completed application form requesting installation of a new prepaid meter to electricitycustomer.support@capetown.gov.za.

6. What tariff will I be placed on once the prepaid meter is installed?

The tariff for prepaid meters is the same as that for credit meters; therefore, the customer will remain on the same tariff after the conversion. If the customer qualifies for the Lifeline tariff that includes free basic electricity, they will be converted to that tariff. If a customer is unsure about the tariff, they may contact the City of Cape Town's Call Centre on 086 010 3089.

7. Will I end up paying more for my electricity?

The customer's tariff will remain the same. If the customer's usage remains the same, they should see no change in the cost of electricity, albeit that the customer will now purchase units before use. There might be a short overlap in costs from the latest account payment to the advance units purchased. Our experience, however, has shown that customers who are aware of their electricity consumption and actively monitor their usage via the prepaid meter often start to change their usage patterns, leading to savings in their electricity costs.

8. How will I recognise the contractor who will perform the meter replacement?

City-employed contractors are required to carry staff IDs that indicate they are City of Cape Town contractors and drive vehicles which are clearly marked. Customers can also confirm the legitimacy of the field staff by requesting a notification number or calling the City of Cape Town's Call Centre on 086 010 3089 to check if it is a legitimate works notice.

Tips for residents:

- Always verify the work order number when an official visits your home.
- Check the official's City-issued identification card.
- The ID card must display the City logo, the name and surname of the staff member or mandated contractor, and must contain an embedded photo of the staff member or mandated contractor.
- If unsure, call the City's Call Centre on 0860 103 089.
- Report suspicious behaviour to the City's law enforcement agencies or to the SAPS.

9. My distribution board is located inside a cupboard. Will this compromise the installation of the prepaid meter?

To save on costs and unnecessary drilling inside the customer's residence, the meter box is installed next to the customer's distribution board. The customer might be asked to remove any obstructing cupboards prior to the installation of the prepaid meter box. The customer can then reinstall the cupboard after the prepaid meter has been fitted. Please note that proper signage is a legal requirement for concealed distribution boards.

10. When will the Meter Replacement Programme happen in my area and how do I know if it will be selected?

City teams and contractors are doing letter-drops in scheduled areas. Once a customer receives the notice, please follow the instructions. Customers are encouraged to email or send an SMS to an Elex Khanyisa contractor. A representative from this service provider will reply as soon as possible and ask for a suitable date and time to book the work. Depending on complexity, the replacement should be done on average within two hours.

If customers have not yet received a letter-drop, and would like to make sure they are placed on the schedule for replacement, they may contact the City place their meter number on the replacement schedule. When teams are in their area, they will be contacted to make the necessary arrangements. The full monthly schedule and roll-out is being finalised and will be [updated on the City's website](#).

To ensure that you are on our target list, please submit a completed application form requesting installation of a new prepaid meter to electricitycustomer.support@capetown.gov.za.

11. Can I convert to a new electricity prepaid meter sooner?

Yes, customers can convert sooner by [completing an application form and indicating when the meter installation is required](#). As this is considered an ad-hoc replacement, a conversion fee of R2 638,26 (ex VAT) will be loaded onto the prepaid account as a debt and recovered as a percentage of the customer's electricity purchases. A customer may apply before an area is reached and then wait until the area is reached, at no cost.

To ensure that you are on our target list, please submit a completed application form requesting installation of a new prepaid meter to electricitycustomer.support@capetown.gov.za.

12. What are the advantages of a prepaid meter?

- Total control over your electricity consumption and real-time measurement. It helps one to reduce usage by being able to monitor the units used.
- No more reading estimations.
- Convenient and stress-free purchasing of electricity.
- Qualifying customers may be placed on the subsidised Lifeline tariff.

13. What will happen if I choose not to switch to prepaid?

This is a compulsory programme. Electricity does not cost more when a credit meter is replaced with a prepaid meter. This is the customer's only opportunity to receive a free prepaid meter; refusal may lead to the disconnection of your electricity supply.

Once the earmarked area is due for the meter replacement, the City will drop a letter in the customer's post box to arrange an appointment. The City provides the customer with 14 days to make an appointment for the meter replacement (after delivery of the notice). To ensure that you are on our target list, please submit a completed application form requesting installation of a new prepaid meter to electricitycustomer.support@capetown.gov.za.

Once the project team has left the customer's area, the conversion will be at the customer's expense as per the Council-approved policy which the City is bound by. However, where we find that we have sufficient requests from a particular area to come back to replace meters, and the number of requests makes economic sense for the contractor to attend to, the City may waive any additional charge and will use the Meter Replacement Programme to install the meters free of charge.

14. What to expect after the first month's billing?

Customers are advised that the first municipal account received after the meter installation might contain their credit meter usage up until the installation of the prepaid meter. This amount must be settled.

15. If it is a prepaid meter replacement, what happens to my remaining units on my old meter? Will the City transfer this to the new meter?

All removed prepaid meters are returned to the City's meter test laboratory for end-of-life interrogation and testing and confirmation of the remaining units on the prepaid meter. Once the remaining units have been confirmed by the City's meter testing laboratory, the City then contacts the customer to issue the remaining units on the new device. All units are issued on the new device.

16. I want to keep my credit meter (post-paid electricity) for the convenience

Prepaid meters are more convenient as residents can purchase electricity via their banking apps and local retailers. It shows usage and improves household management of costs and it also enables eligible customers to be placed on the subsidised Lifeline tariff.

Residents who prefer to stay on post-paid billing have the option of installing an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meter at a cost of R6,043.20 and a monthly service fee of R54.

17. Is buying electricity in bulk cheaper?

Buying electricity in bulk is not cheaper. Rather buy small amounts as required to stay on the cheaper tariff band. Buying larger amounts pushes one into a more expensive tariff category. To stay on the cheapest tariffs band as a domestic and Home User customer it is advised to aim for under 600 units per month. Buy only what is needed.