

The Energy Advice Line saves customer thousands on incorrect gas bill

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BUSINESS energy (<http://www.energyadvice.org.uk/l-compare-business-energy-prices.php>) users who believe they have been overcharged or issued incorrect bills by their supplier have been urged to contact the Energy Advice Line for free help.

The UK's leading price comparison and switching service for business confirmed the findings of a report revealing thousands of consumers could be missing out on refunds or compensation because of billing mistakes by suppliers.

The report by consumer organisation Which? showed that the 'big six' energy firms received more than four million complaints from customers last year. The most common problems were mistakes on bills and inaccurate meter readings.

It suggested that because many customers failed to pursue their complaints, they were losing out on up to £4 million in compensation.

Julian Morgan, managing director of the Energy Advice Line, the UK's leading price comparison and switching service for business, said business electricity (http://www.energyadvice.org.uk/business_electricity.php) and business gas (http://www.energyadvice.org.uk/business_gas.php) customers were in the same position as domestic consumers when it came to billing mistakes.

"Business energy supply companies make mistakes, we know that for a fact, and sometimes these issues go unresolved for so long that customers just get worn down and give up," Mr Morgan said.

"We help our customers who are switching suppliers resolve these issues by taking them up directly with the utility companies on their behalf. Sometimes because they have dragged on for so long these problems can be difficult to unravel, so having experts on board can help enormously."

Sally Atherall had given up hope of resolving a dispute with British Gas until she called the Energy Advice Line. One year after she had sold her dog kenneling business, British Gas had sent her a final business energy bill demanding £3,260.

Sally knew the bill was wrong and spent many fruitless, stressful and tearful weeks trying to convince the supplier they had made a mistake. But her complaints were rejected and British Gas insisted that she pay. Sally said they began "pestering" her for the money so much that was too stressed to answer the telephone.

As a last resort, she contacted the Energy Advice Line for help.

"I began to feel helpless, hopeless, tearful and alone," Sally said. "Fighting against British Gas was useless on my own. I decided to ring the Energy Advice Line (<http://www.energyadvice.org.uk/>) one day to try to gather more evidence, as they had arranged my electricity supply for several years.

"What a relief. I told them my story and they offered not only to help me, but to take the case on for

me and deal with British Gas on my behalf. They even took time to ring me back to check I was OK as I had sounded upset.

“Eventually, the complaint was brought to the director of customer services for British Gas. They still insisted that I owed them the money and sent me a CD of the voice recordings made when I had telephone them with meter readings in the past.

“A copy of the CD was also sent to the Energy Advice Line. On playing it, they realized that British Gas had used the wrong 'start' reads to create my bill. I do owe British Gas a small amount of extra money but nowhere near £3,260.

“British Gas doesn't care about their customers and have no idea of the heartache they cause when they get it wrong and refuse to listen. Even now, they have not offered one word of apology.”

The Energy Advice Line has also urged business energy (<http://www.energyadvice.org.uk/l-compare-business-energy-prices.php>) users to check their bills to ensure they are being charged the correct level of VAT.

The VAT on electricity and gas for business energy consumers is normally charged at the standard rate of 20% (correct as at 4 January 2011). However, some firms that meet so-called de minimis requirements are entitled to pay VAT at a rate of only 5%.

To meet the criteria for this lower rate, a business must use no more than 33 kWh per day on average for business electricity and/or less than an average of 5 therms or 145 kWh per day for business gas.

Firms that believe they have been paying too much VAT, or have other billing issues, should contact the Energy Advice Line on 0800 915 1800 or visit www.energyadvice.org.uk (<http://www.energyadvice.org.uk/>)

About Energy Advice Line

The Energy Advice Line, an impartial online business electricity and business gas price comparison service run by business energy experts for business energy customers, dedicated exclusively to the needs of small and medium-sized businesses in the UK. Realising that small and medium sized business electricity and gas consumers want product choice, EAL has developed an online price comparison and switching service exclusively dedicated to their needs. Visit <http://www.energyadvice.org.uk/> for more details.

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