



The Facts about Natural Gas Budget Billing

Budget billing programs can help consumers spread their natural gas expenses over 12 months and are available to all residential customers, except those now on the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) or another payment plan. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel provides the following information for customers of **Duke Energy, Columbia Gas of Ohio, Dominion East Ohio** and **Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio**.

To calculate a monthly charge, budget billing payments are determined by looking at historical usage or the usage at the residence over the past 12 months and the expected cost of natural gas. Budget amounts may be adjusted throughout the

year depending on the actual cost of natural gas and weather conditions. Customers should contact their local utility or the OCC for more information about eligibility. Here are a few terms:

Budget billing - Enables projected annual gas costs to be divided by a timeline of equal payments.

Budget billing reviews and adjustments – Budget amounts may be reviewed by the utility one or more times throughout the year. These reviews take into consideration any differences between the budget amount, gas costs and the actual amount of natural gas used.

If a customer paid more for natural gas than actually used, the company may recalculate the budget billing amount and reduce the

payment. **If a customer paid less** for natural gas than actually used, the company may recalculate the budget billing amount and increase monthly payments.

Year-end review and balancing – At the end of the budget year, any remaining balances may be rolled into a new budget payment amount or may need to be paid in full by the due date.

Listed below is a chart explaining the budget billing program for each regulated natural gas company. This information is believed to be correct, but is in no way guaranteed. Please contact your natural gas company for more information before you enroll in the budget billing program.

Company	Enrollment	Periodic account reviews and adjustments	Year-end review and balancing
<p>Duke Energy</p> <p>Annual Plan</p>	<p>When: Any time throughout the year.</p> <p>How: Toll free at 1-800-544-6900 or online at www.duke-energy.com.</p>	<p><u>Annual Plan</u> – Customers pay the same budget amount for 11 months. In the sixth month, a mid-year review is conducted. If the review results in a difference of 30 percent more or less per month, customers will receive a message on the following month's bill recommending that Duke Energy be allowed to adjust the monthly budget amount higher or lower to reflect usage more accurately. <u>The customer must call Duke Energy if he or she agree to have the budget amount adjusted. Otherwise, the budget amount will not change.</u></p>	<p>In the 12th month customers will see an adjustment made on their bills to make up for any difference between the past 11 months' payments and actual natural gas usage. This could result in either a credit or a charge. Any charges must be paid in full by the due date on that month's bill. In addition, a new budget billing plan amount is set for the next program year.</p>

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Company	Enrollment	Periodic account reviews and adjustments	Year-end review and balancing
<p>Duke Energy Quarterly Plan</p>	<p>When: Any time throughout the year. How: Toll free at 1-800-544-6900 or online at www.duke-energy.com.</p>	<p><u>Quarterly Plan</u> — An initial monthly payment is determined, and every three months the actual usage is reviewed by Duke Energy. If your usage varies by 10 percent more or less from the monthly payment, a message will appear on your next bill and the company will automatically adjust future payment amounts either higher or lower to reflect the actual cost.</p>	<p>There is no 12-month or year-end adjustment. Accounts are reviewed every three months.</p>
<p>Columbia Gas of Ohio</p>	<p>When: The program officially begins in August, but customers may enroll at any time. Enrolling in the program after August may result in a higher budget amount because the payments are spread over fewer months. How: Toll free at 1-800-344-4077, online at www.columbiagasohio.com or by simply paying the budget amount that appears on the August bill.</p>	<p>Budget amounts are reviewed in March. If the review results in a difference of \$4 per month more or less than the current budget payment, the company will adjust the budget amount to reflect the new payment beginning with the April bill.</p>	<p>In July, the company performs a year-end review, which could result in either a credit or a charge. Any charges must be paid in full by the due date on that month's bill. In addition, a new budget billing plan amount is set for the next program year.</p>
<p>Dominion East Ohio</p>	<p>When: Customers can enroll any time. Enrolling in the program during the late summer or winter heating season may result in a higher budget amount because the usage and rates are generally higher. How: Toll free at 1-800-362-7557 or online at www.dom.com.</p>	<p>Budget accounts are reviewed every month. If the account balance is off by five times or more than the budget amount, a recalculation takes place. If no recalculation is needed, then the budget review will take place at least once every six months. Changes will not be made more than two months in a row. For more specific details about the program, contact Dominion.</p>	<p>There is no 12-month or year-end adjustment. Accounts are reviewed periodically throughout the year.</p>
<p>Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio</p>	<p>When: Any time throughout the year. How: Toll free at 1-800-227-1376. Customers who have an online account can enroll at www.vectrenenergy.com.</p>	<p>Budget bills are reviewed in July and August. Any adjustments, either credits or charges as a result of this review, are automatically figured into the new budget amount that begins in August.</p>	<p>There is no 12-month or year-end adjustment. Accounts are reviewed in July.</p>

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Budget Billing Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What if I no longer want to be in a budget billing program?

A. Customers must contact their natural gas company and request to be removed from the budget billing program.

Q. What happens if I miss a monthly budget payment?

A. Customers must pay their budget amount by the due date indicated on the bill or they may be dropped from the budget billing program.

Q. If I have a competitive natural gas supplier can I still be on budget billing?

A. Yes. Currently, natural gas companies do all of the billing for competitive suppliers so you should be able to participate in budget billing. However, if you have chosen a supplier that offers a variable rate your budget billing payment could go up or down depending on whether the supplier's rate increases or decreases. Contact your natural gas company and supplier if you have additional questions.

Q. My budget payment just increased, is there anything I can do to minimize future adjustments to my payment amount?

A. Yes. Some natural gas companies estimate how much natural gas is used instead of actually reading the meter at a home every month. Because these are just estimates, actual usage could be higher or lower and, therefore, impact any future budget billing adjustments.

To minimize the amount of budget billing adjustments, customers may want to take an actual meter reading periodically and call it in to the company. This will help the customer and the company, keep the budget payment more accurate.

Q. I am served by a small natural gas company. Can I get budget billing?

A. Some smaller natural gas companies may offer budget billing. For more information contact the local utility.

For a free guide about "How to read your natural gas meter" or for more information, call the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel toll free at 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) or visit the publications page online at www.pickocc.org.



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For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:

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