



COMMUNITY POWER
Power of Together

**INFORMATION FOR
MEDICALLY DEPENDENT
AND
VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS**

IMPORTANT

PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE AND SOMEONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD OR PREMISE BECOMES DEPENDENT ON ELECTRCITY SUPPLY FOR CRITICAL MEDICAL SUPPORT OR COULD BE DEFINED AS A VULNERABLE CUSTOMER.

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1. Medical Dependent Consumers

1.1. Introduction

The information set out below is designed to ensure that all Medically Dependent Customers of Community Power receive the most appropriate consideration of their needs and any support that they are legally entitled to.

1.2. Definition of a Medically Dependent Consumer

- (a) A Medically Dependent Consumer is a person defined by the Electricity Authority as someone who is dependent on mains electricity for critical medical support, such that loss of electricity may result in loss of life or serious harm. For the avoidance of doubt, medical dependence on electricity could be for use of medical or other electrical equipment needed to support the treatment regime (e.g. a microwave to heat fluids for renal dialysis or equipment such as that listed in **Appendix B**).
- (b) Only people well enough or with sufficient support to effectively communicate with their electricity retailer will be discharged from hospital with Critical Electrical Medical Equipment.
- (c) The initial medical opinion as to whether a domestic consumer is a potential Medically Dependent Consumer is made by a District Health Board, private hospital or General Practitioner. Subsequent opinion verifying a domestic consumer's ongoing Medically Dependent status, as outlined in this Guideline, is given by a Health Practitioner with an appropriate scope of practice⁽¹⁾.

1.3. Medically Dependent Consumers Responsibilities

1.3.1 Disclosure of relevant private or personal information

It is the consumer's responsibility to disclose private or personal information that may be relevant to any disconnection decision by an electricity retailer. This includes information on a person having been assessed by a District Health Board, private hospital or General Practitioner to be a Medically Dependent Consumer (as defined by this document), or information on any change to a domestic consumer Medially Dependent status over time.

1. As that term is defined in section 5 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

1.3.2 Consumers Actions and Choices

Domestic consumers are responsible for their actions. Electricity Retailers, health professionals and Work and Income are not responsible for, nor required to monitor, consumer/patient/client choices.

1.3.3 Electricity Outages and Backup Plans

This information does not imply a guaranteed supply of electricity to Medically Dependent Consumers. From time to time temporary electricity outages may occur and Medically Dependent Consumers should ensure they have backup plans in place to handle such temporary outages.

Such a plan will be particular to the Medically Dependent Consumer affected and may range from ensuring that a stand-by battery is always fully charged, to relocating to a friend's or family member's premises which has electricity at that point in time, or even calling an ambulance to be taken to hospital.

1.3.4 Notifying us of yours' or someone in your household or premise, Medically Dependent status

- (a) The privacy and confidentiality of domestic consumers will be respected;
- (b) If you or someone in your household or premise is prescribed or supplied Critical Electrical Medical Equipment you/they will be provided with the Notice of Potential Medical Dependent Consumer status (**see Appendix A**) by your/their District Health Board, private hospital or General Practitioner(2).
- (c) You should then notify us of your/their Medically Dependent status (e.g. by Telephone) and provide us with a copy of the Notice of Potential Medically Dependent status (e.g. by email or post).
- (d) It is the consumer's responsibility to inform us if someone in your household or premise becomes medically Dependent on electricity supply for critical medical support;
- (e) It is the consumer's responsibility to keep us informed when there is no longer a Medically Dependent Consumer resident at the property;
- (f) When switching retailers, it is the domestic consumer's responsibility to inform the new retailer of their Medically Dependent status. It is likely that the new retailer will require a copy of the Notice of Potential Medically Dependent status.

2. This is the key means by which retailers identify potential Medical Dependent Consumers and obtain details of a Medically Dependent Consumers Critical Electrical Medical Equipment prescribing/supplying District Health Board, private hospital or General Practitioner.

1.4 Knowledge, Training and Support to Medically Dependent Consumers

Health Practitioners, in accordance with appropriate clinical practice, are responsible for providing knowledge, training and support to a Medically Dependent Consumer supplied with or prescribed Critical Electrical Medical Equipment. In particular, about;

- (i) The use of the Critical Electrical Medical Equipment
- (ii) What to do in an emergency, including when the supply of electricity may be interrupted for any reason.

1.5 Having trouble paying your electricity bills to us?

- (a) A key concept underpinning our desire to ensure all Medically Dependent Consumers of Community Power receive the most appropriate consideration of their needs and are not disconnected inappropriately because of non-payment for electricity, is early intervention.
- (b) Therefore, if you anticipate facing difficulties paying your electricity bills, then you should notify us as soon as possible to discuss any possible alternatives, including those outlined in 1.6 below.
- (c) Similarly, if we believe that you are having trouble paying your electricity bill we will discuss payment alternatives and if appropriate provide contact details of social and budgetary agencies that may be able to assist.
- (d) However, it is important that you recognise that electricity retailers have a right to be paid.

1.6 Alternative Payment Arrangements

Alternatives payment arrangements include;

- i) A repayment arrangement for any arrears over a reasonable period of time;
- ii) Smoothed payments i.e. a regular fixed amount, this could be payable weekly or fortnightly to tie in with your frequency of income;
- iii) Redirection of income directly from your income source;
- iv) The installation of a pre-paid meter;
- v) Granting consent for us to engage with Work and Income for an assessment of whether you will receive financial assistance from Work and Income to meet some or all of your electricity costs.

1.7 The role of Work and Income

The role of Work and Income is to ensure that people receive all the government financial assistance that is available to them. Work and Income's role is not that of a credit agency, nor does it have any responsibility for, or to pay off, consumer debt.

1.8 Alternate Contact

- (a) If you are having difficulties, or if you believe that at some time in the future you may have difficulties with your electricity payments or with communicating with us, you may provide one or more alternate contacts who have agreed to assist if a disconnection or payment notice issue is pending.

- (b) The alternate contact member could be a family member, friend or a social agency. The alternate contact's role may, for instance, be to communicate with us to ensure that he or she fully understands the situation, or to provide financial assistance to the domestic consumer to prevent a disconnection.

- (c) For the avoidance of doubt, the alternate contact would not have a contractual relationship with us, but would be used to assist you or to provide us with an alternate method to contact you.

2. Vulnerable Consumers

2.1. Introduction

The information set out below is designed to ensure that all Vulnerable customers of Community Power receive the most appropriate consideration of their needs and are not disconnected inappropriately because of non-payment for electricity.

2.2. Definition of a Vulnerable Consumer

A Vulnerable Consumer is defined as a domestic electricity consumer where the disconnection of electricity presents a clear risk to their health or wellbeing.

The Electricity Authority defines these domestic consumers as “Vulnerable Consumers”, per the following definition.

A domestic consumer is vulnerable if;

- i) for reasons of age, health or disability, the disconnection of electricity to that domestic consumer presents a clear threat to the health or wellbeing of that domestic consumer; and/or
- ii) it is genuinely difficult for the domestic consumer to pay his or her electricity bills because of severe financial insecurity⁽³⁾ whether temporary or permanent.

2.3. Vulnerable Consumers Responsibilities

2.3.1 Disclosure of relevant private or personal information

- (a) The privacy and confidentiality of domestic consumers will be respected;
- (b) It is the consumer’s responsibility to disclose private or personal information that may be relevant to any disconnection decision. This includes information on any change to the domestic consumer’s vulnerable status over time;

2.3.2 Consumers Actions and Choices

Domestic consumers are responsible for their actions. Electricity Retailers and Work and Income are not responsible for, nor required to monitor, consumer/client choices.

3. Severe financial insecurity also includes low income.

2.3.3 Advising us of your Vulnerability status.

- (a) A key concept underpinning our desire to ensure all Vulnerable customers of Community Power receive the most appropriate consideration of their needs and are not disconnected inappropriately because of non-payment for electricity, is early intervention.
- (b) Therefore, if you anticipate facing difficulties paying your electricity bills, then you should notify us as soon as possible to discuss any possible alternatives, including those outlined in 2.4 below.
- (c) Similarly, if we believe that you are having trouble paying your electricity bill we will discuss payment alternatives and if appropriate provide contact details of social and budgetary agencies that may be able to assist.
- (d) However, it is important that you recognise that electricity retailers have a right to be paid.

2.4. Alternative Payment Arrangements

Alternatives payment arrangements include;

- i) A repayment arrangement for any arrears over a reasonable period of time;
- ii) Smoothed payments i.e. a regular fixed amount, this could be payable weekly or fortnightly to tie in with your frequency of income;
- iii) Redirection of income directly from your income source;
- iv) The installation of a pre-paid meter;
- v) Granting consent for us to engage with Work and Income for an assessment of whether you will receive financial assistance from Work and Income to meet some or all of your electricity costs.

2.5. The role of Work and Income

The role of Work and Income is to ensure that people receive all the government financial assistance that is available to them. Work and Income's role is not that of a credit agency, nor does it have any responsibility for, or to pay off, consumer debt.

2.6. Alternative Contact

- (a) If you are having difficulties, or if you believe that at some time in the future you may have difficulties with your electricity payments or with communicating with us, you may provide one or more alternate contacts who have agreed to assist if a disconnection or payment notice issue is pending.

- (b) The alternate contact member could be a family member, friend or a social agency. The alternate contact's role may, for instance, be to communicate with us to ensure that he or she fully understands the situation, or to provide financial assistance to the domestic consumer to prevent a disconnection.
- (c) For the avoidance of doubt, the alternate contact would not have a contractual relationship with us, but would be used to assist you or to provide us with an alternate method to contact you.

APPENDIX A:

Notice of Potential Medically Dependent Consumer (MDC) Status²²

To the Patient

Please pass this form onto your electricity provider.

Hoatu te puka nei ki tō kaiwhakarato hiko.

Fa'amolemole 'ave lenei pepa i le kamupani 'olo'o sapalai maia lau 'eletise.

Kātaki 'o 'ave 'a e foomu ko 'eni' ki he kautaha 'oku mou ma'u 'uhila mei ai'.

Me ka tika, tukuia atu teia fōmu ki toou ona ūira.

请把本表交给您的电力供应商。

PART A - PATIENT DETAILS

Patient's name: _____

Patient's date of birth: _____

Patient's contact phone number(s):

_____ (h) _____ (m) _____ (w)

Caregiver's contact phone number(s) – *if different from patient's*:

_____ (h) _____ (m) _____ (w)

Full physical address (*PO Box or RD is not acceptable*) where the patient will reside on discharge (Residence):

Name(s) of electricity account holder(s) at residence where the patient will reside on discharge:

Contact phone number(s) of electricity account holder(s):

_____ (h) _____ (m) _____ (w)

Residence's electricity ICP number (*this can be found on the residence's electricity bill – usually up to 15 characters*): _____

Residence's electricity account number (*this can be found on the residence's electricity bill*):

Consent: - As the recipient of this medical equipment and a potentially medically dependent consumer, I consent to the information on this form and information on the future status of my dependence on the medical equipment to be shared between the health practitioner(s), electricity retailer(s) and/or the electricity account holder for the domestic residence where I will be residing, for the purpose of ensuring that the electricity retailer is informed of my medical dependence on electrical equipment and my status as a medically dependent electricity consumer. The electricity retailer may use this information to identify residences where electricity disconnection, for whatever reason, may have significant consequences.

Patient signature: _____ Date: _____
and/or

Caregiver signature: _____ Date: _____

PART B - CONFIRMATION THAT ELECTRICITY IS REQUIRED

I certify that _____ (patient's name) with NHI number _____ is:

- (a) using mains electricity dependent critical electrical medical equipment (CEME); and
- (b) at some point in the future may be dependent on the CEME to the extent that disconnection may result in loss of life or serious harm. (If so, the patient is a potentially medically dependent consumer (of electricity)^{23.})

I also certify that the patient listed above has been provided knowledge, training and support, in accordance with appropriate clinical practice:

- (a) for the use of the CEME; and
- (b) what to do in an emergency, including when the supply of electricity may be interrupted for any reason.

Where:

- (a) Critical medical support is defined as support which, in the opinion of a DHB, private hospital or GP, is required to prevent loss of life or serious harm; and
- (b) CEME is defined as any equipment supplied or prescribed by a DHB, private hospital or GP, which requires mains electricity to provide critical medical support to a person, and includes other electrical equipment needed to support either the CEME or the treatment regime (e.g. a microwave to heat fluids for renal dialysis).

Note: The patient's electricity retailer may seek advice on the patient's status as a MDC if at any point in the future the patient faces disconnection.

Date: _____

Name of DHB/private hospital/GP: of the health practitioner treating the patient (including designation):

Signature of the health practitioner treating the patient:

OR

Name of another health practitioner, signing on behalf of the health practitioner treating the patient (including designation):

Signature:

Contact number and/or email address of signatory:

Disclaimer: The DHB/private hospital/GP/issuer of this Notice of Potential MDC Status on behalf of the patient, takes no responsibility for any debts incurred by the patient in relation to transactions or arrangements entered into by the patient with the electricity retailer.

ADDITIONAL:

Notice of Potential Medically Dependent Consumer Status (Notice of Potential MDC Status)

The Notice of Potential MDC Status has 2 parts:

Part A – to be completed by the patient/caregiver.

The DHBs, private hospitals and GPs can assist retailers by checking that the patient/caregiver:

- has filled in as much of the form as possible as this will assist his/her retailer to identify the correct account. Specifically, providing a residential address (not a PO Box or RD number), and recording the names of any of the household members who may be the account holder, will be particularly useful;
- understands and has signed the consent portion of the form; and
- understands the importance of:
 - completing the Notice of Potential MDC Status; and
 - giving the Notice of Potential MDC Status to the patient's retailer.

Part B – to be completed by a representative of the DHB, private hospital or GP, and signed by the health practitioner treating the patient (or by another health practitioner signing on behalf of the health practitioner treating the patient).

DHBs, private hospitals and GPs should check that the patient/caregiver has been informed of all relevant aspects of using the CEME including:

- what to do in the case of planned or unplanned electricity outages;
- information on the likely costs associated with operating the CEME and, if appropriate, advising the patient/caregiver that financial assistance may be available from Work and Income;
- advising that if electricity loss occurs, there may be loss of power to the telephone if the only phone in the home requires electricity (relevant if the telephone is needed to call an ambulance in the event of a power outage); and
- discussing whether critical mobility aids (for example wheelchair hoists), may require battery backup.

DHBs, private hospitals and GPs should also ensure that patients are well enough or with sufficient support to effectively communicate with their retailer when discharged from the hospital with CEME (as per Ministry of Health Letter to the Electricity Commission; 18 February 2008).

APPENDIX B

Non-exhaustive list of critical electrical medical equipment

- Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine
- Nasal Continuous Positive Airways pressure machine
- Non-invasive Ventilation (NIV) Bi-level Positive Airway Pressure (BiPAP) machine
- Oxygen concentrator
- Renal dialysis – Automated Peritoneal Dialysis (APD)
- Renal dialysis – Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD)
- Renal haemodialysis machine
- Total Parenteral Nutrition
 - Ventilator
 - Ventricular Assistance Device.

Note:

Please be aware that this is a **NON-EXHAUSTIVE** list of Critical Electrical Medical Equipment.