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### **Advice to clients: COVID-19 and your business energy contract.**

Dear Client,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to explain the steps we are taking to support our clients during this unprecedented situation. Whilst some business sectors have been more heavily disrupted than others, we understand that the overwhelming majority of businesses have, like ourselves, been adversely impacted by the countrywide efforts being taken to combat COVID-19.

My colleagues and I have spoken to many of you who have concerns about your energy contracts during this period of disruption. We service clients from many business sectors; manufacturing, retail, hospitality/leisure, education – many who are experiencing a forced shutdown or a massive reduction in demand.

For most businesses, energy is the third largest overhead after premises and wage costs and many of our clients are, quite understandably, looking at ways to reduce these overheads. Below is a summary of the questions we are frequently being asked, and the advice we are giving to clients who have concerns about their energy bills.

#### **We have had to suspend trading, what can I do to reduce my monthly bills?**

If your consumption has fallen due to suspension or reduction of trade, it is important that you are billed accurately and only for the energy you are using. If you have a Half Hourly metered supply, AMR or SMART meter, the supplier will be aware of this and your



bills should reduce automatically. If you do not have one of these meters, you should, if safe to do so, obtain regular meter readings (ideally weekly and by photograph if possible) and submit these either to Tritility or the supplier directly to ensure you receive accurate bills. If you are unable to access your property to obtain meter readings please call us and we will negotiate with your supplier on your behalf. If we have recommended a supplier who has a 'Budget Plan' style payment plan, whereby you pay equal monthly installments based on your forecast annual consumption, please contact us and we will liaise with suppliers on your behalf to lower these amounts based on a more realistic lower consumption forecast.

### **Should I cancel my Direct Debit?**

Many businesses are keeping a very keen eye on cashflow and some have considered cancelling their Direct Debit mandate with suppliers to gain some additional control over cashflow. Our strong recommendation to any client who is considering this is **to not cancel your direct debit mandate**. 95% of our clients pay their supplier by Direct Debit and to get the very best rates we can for these clients, we typically recommend contracts whereby clients receive a discount for direct debit payment. Cancelling your direct debit agreement can result in **substantial additional charges** – some suppliers charge a fixed fee per invoice, others will apply a (sometimes substantial) premium to your energy unit rate for the time you do not have a Direct Debit mandate in place. **In all instances, we would urge you to contact us instead of cancelling your Direct Debit mandate** so that we can liaise with your supplier to amend your direct debit amount appropriately to ensure you are comfortable with the amount taken.

### **I am in arrears with my energy bills and am worried about being disconnected.**

The most effective way to prevent disconnection is to engage and communicate with your supplier **as soon as possible**. Suppliers only ever disconnect as an absolute last resort. We can support you and liaise with your supplier on your behalf; the sooner you contact us the more options we have.



**I am unable to visit our premises to collect my energy bill(s).**

Some clients are unable to visit their premises due to restrictions brought into to combat the spread of COVID-19. If this applies to you, please contact us and we will arrange for bills and other supplier communications to be forwarded to a nominated email address when bills are produced or alternatively we can arrange for postal bills to be sent to a more suitable address.

**I can't pay my bill. Are suppliers offering a 'payment holiday' on energy bills?**

If you are genuinely unable to pay your bill then support/time to pay may be offered but a proactive 'payment holiday' is unlikely to be available. We work with many suppliers outside of the 'Big 6' energy suppliers that many are familiar with for their domestic energy; including many smaller independent suppliers who are also acutely impacted by the current situation. Whilst suppliers will do all they can to support businesses, understandably they also need to protect their own cashflow position. If you find yourself unable to pay your bill, contact us in the first instance so we can give advice and guidance.

**Is there any financial support available from the Government that could help my business?**

Yes – though not specifically related to energy bills, the Government has announced wide reaching financial support including a package of grants, loans and taxation support which may assist your overall financial position. More information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

**We have been forced to permanently cease trading, how can I cancel I energy contract.**

We understand that despite best efforts, many businesses will be left in the unfortunate position of being forced to permanently cease trading. If you are in this situation, contact us and we will liaise with your supplier to notify them of this and cancel your energy contract in line with their Terms and Conditions. You will remain liable for the cost of energy consumed up until the point that you are no longer legally responsible for the premises.



### **What if it is approaching the time to renew my energy contracts?**

The energy market has been heavily impacted by Coronavirus – there are some extremely low rates available now, with the option of taking advantage of and securing these rates for a longer term contract if appropriate for your business. As part of our account management services, our colleagues who are working from home will make pro-active contact with anyone who is approaching their renewal window.

### **How can I get in contact with you?**

Our contact methods are the same; telephones have been diverted to colleagues at home and emails are being dealt with remotely.

As always, you can contact us 8:30-17:00 Mon-Thurs and 09:00-15:00 Friday on 0191 694 1234 or email [customer.service@tritility.com](mailto:customer.service@tritility.com). If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us and we will do all we can to help.

On behalf of my colleagues and myself, I wish you all the best. We look forward to continuing to serve you as normal once this difficult time is over.

Yours Faithfully,



**Jamie Wyatt**  
Director