

The Energy Services and Technology Association (ESTA) consists of over 100 members who supply energy management and energy efficiency products and services to all sectors including commercial and industrial consumers.

The Metering and Monitoring Group of ESTA have specialists in metering, data collection and include the UK principle providers of M&T software. These software systems are capable of receiving and processing energy invoices through electronic billing.

ESTA Metering and Monitoring Group members endorse the TRADACOM 26 common open standard for utility billing in the UK and encourage its adoption by suppliers and consumers.

The UK standard for electronic billing (or Electronic Data Interchange EDI) is the TRADACOMS 26 version 3 format. The custodian of the standard is GS1 UK (formerly the Article Number Association) who are also responsible for other electronic standards such as bar codes and radio frequency operations, and represent the UK on United Nations standards committees.

The benefits of electronic billing are:

- Reduction of costs and improved efficiency
- Avoidance of associated errors of manual data input
- HM Revenue & Customs approved end to end processes
- Uniformity and professionalism to utility invoice processing, which has been enjoyed throughout other business sectors

The electricity, gas and water companies that can provide TRADACOMS 26 standard electronic include:

Utility Company	Utility	Format
British Energy	Electricity	TRADACOMS v3
Centrica	Electricity	TRADACOMS v3
Centrica	Gas	TRADACOMS v3
Corona Energy	Gas	TRADACOMS v3
E.ON (PowerGen)	Electricity	TRADACOMS v3
Gaz de France	Gas	TRADACOMS v3
Gaz de France	Electricity	TRADACOMS v3
Laser	Electricity	TRADACOMS v2
Laser	Gas	TRADACOMS v2
Mobil Gas	Gas	TRADACOMS v3
npower	Electricity	TRADACOMS v3
npower	Gas	TRADACOMS v3
Scottish and Southern (Southern Electric)	Electricity	TRADACOMS v3
Shell Gas	Gas	TRADACOMS v3
Yorkshire Water	Water	TRADACOMS v2

Benefits of adopting TRADACOMS 26v3 instead of ASCII/CSV Files

TRADACOMS	ASCII/CSV
TRADACOMS 26 v3 is the only UK utility billing standard	Non standard
Approximately 95% of processing software is common, thereby reducing costs of implementation and time to market	Non-standard ASCII or CSV files require bespoke software development for each supplier
Change control management can be implemented using a common "Message Interchange Agreement"	With ASCII files the utility company is in control of the format and can change the "bill" format without warning
An HM Revenue and Customs approved end to end process	ASCII or CSV files commonly do not include sufficient information to be approved and usually have to be supported by paper bills
Controlled and enforced by the independent organisation GS1 UK	Not controlled or enforced
Supports the requirements of BS 8463: 2005 Specification for Customer Billing Practice	Does not support any specifications
Supports various government e-billing initiatives including BV 8 and BV 157 for local authorities and the eprocurement 2005 initiative from government	Does not support any initiatives
Supported by the principal UK M&T software suppliers and members of ESTA (Energy Services and Technology Association)	Not supported

Benefits to the Utility

The benefits to the utility are largely the same as for the customer and described above. Some additional benefits include:

- One standard is cheaper and simpler to support rather than different format requests from each customer
- Increased speed of customer payment
- Improved customer satisfaction

So how do we move to the common ebilling standard?

1. Request that your utility company provide ebilling to the UK standard TRADACOMS 26v3 protocol.
2. Sign up to the "Message Interchange Agreement" originated by GS1 UK and modified for use for utility billing.
3. See your software supplier for assistance if required.