BillSaver

- The program that will Save You from those Huge Telephone Bills!

Please take the next few minutes to learn a little bit about BillSaver and to get some tips on how to get the most out of this program.

Please support the Shareware concept!

NOTE: This program is distributed as Shareware. This means that you may freely distribute it anywhere you want! You may copy this program to your friends, upload to software archives on Internet, to bulletin boards, or whatever. . . You may **NOT**, however, charge any money for this program. Thus you may **NOT** include this file on shareware CD-ROMs, magazine cover discs, etc. without asking my permission first.

You have **30** days to evaluate and test BillSaver to see whether it suits your needs. By the end of that period you will either have to <u>register</u> this program (for only **$15**) if you would like to keep using it, or remove it from your system.

Violation of Shareware concept in any way is AGAINST THE LAW!

This help file is organised into the following categories:

BillSaver version 1.0.0
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Overview

So, what the heck is BillSaver then???

Let's face it, Internet can be a very addictive thing. From the very first moment when you have installed the modem into your PC, you have probably been hooked to the Net. Sure, downloading programs, utilities and games, chatting to friends on IRC, surfing the Web and browsing the newsgroups is very interesting, but when it comes to paying the Telephone Bill, err... You probably know the rest!

We all know that **Time Is Money**, and on Internet this expression takes its literal meaning. Every minute, every second of your on-line time is logged somewhere and will return to you someday as a telephone bill.

So to make the long story short, BillSaver is a neat utility that will optimise and reduce your on-line time and therefore dramatically reduce the phone bill you will have to pay at the end of the month.

BillSaver, will accurately log the time you spend on-line and calculate the total cost of all the phone calls you have made. At any moment during your on-line session you can get information on how much you have spent on that particular session, during that day, and in that month, with a simple mouse click. With another mouse click you can get a complete text report on how much you have spent this month so far, as well as and estimated amount of money you will spend if you keep spending more or less the same amount of time surfing the Net every day.

No more *"Hey, I didn't spend THAT much ! ! !"* moments when you receive your phone bill.

In addition to this, BillSaver also allows you set the limit on how much money you can afford to spend on your on-line activity every month, every day and even on each call. BillSaver displays a progress bar for each of these 3 amounts, showing how much time you have already spent on-line against how much you can **afford** to spend. The program will even display customizable messages and warnings in case you go over any of these 3 limits.

Are you sure that BillSaver will help me?

Definitely. BillSaver is a very powerful utility and it will help you greatly if used in the right way. You should decide how much of your budget you can afford to spend on your Internet activity monthly and feed that number to BillSaver. That's it!

At every moment since then you will be able to see whether you spend more time on-line than you can afford to, and if so, how much more.

Please proceed to the next topic: Getting started to find out how to install BillSaver and how to configure it to suit your needs.

Getting Started

If you are reading this file now, then you have probably already worked out how to install BillSaver to your hard disk. You should now start BillSaver from the folder you have installed it to.

Since this is the first time you run BillSaver, you will have to configure it by providing information about the billing system your phone company uses, as well as your personal preferences.

The "**Preferences**" dialog box pops up. Please proceed to the topic Customizing BillSaver for detailed information on each of the elements in this dialog box.

You can also proceed to Interface topic to find out how to perform various actions in BillSaver.

Customizing BillSaver

The "**Customize BillSaver**"   dialog box pops up when you first install BillSaver. You will use it to provide BillSaver with some basic information about the billing system that your telephone company uses, whether or not you want warnings displayed if you have stayed on the Net for a long time, etc.

You can change any of the options anytime later by clicking the "**Customize...**" button in the program's <u>main window</u>.

This dialog box contains 3 tabs:

<u>"Billing"</u>   Tell BillSaver about the billing system used by your telephone company.

<u>"Limits"</u>   Allows you to set the amount of money you can afford to spend on the Net daily and monthly.

<u>"Messages"</u>   Allows you to customize message warnings to display when any of these limits is reached.

Interface

BillSaver is an utility that is designed with a straightforward interface in mind. When BillSaver is first started, the program enters its <u>background</u> mode. In this mode BillSaver will silently run in background, without interfering with any of your computer's other tasks. A small icon will be displayed in your *system tray* (the area at the right side of the Taskbar, where the clock is) that will allow you to control BillSaver's activity.
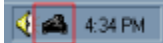
This icon represents BillSaver's default state - your computer is <u>not connected to the Net</u> and BillSaver's <u>timer is not currently running</u>.

Left-click this icon to switch BillSaver into <u>foreground</u> mode and bring up its <u>Main Window</u>. Clicking this icon again (or clicking the **Hide Window** button in BillSaver's Main Window) will switch BillSaver to its <u>background</u> state again and hide its main window.

Right-click this icon to **start the timer** for a new call. You should always do this immediately after your computer has connected to the Net.

This "phone off the hook" icon is displayed to indicate that BillSaver's <u>timer is currently running.</u>

Left-click this icon to switch BillSaver into <u>foreground</u> mode and bring up its <u>Main Window</u>.Clicking this icon again (or clicking the **Hide Window** button in BillSaver's Main

Window) will switch BillSaver to its <u>background</u> state again and hide its main window.

Right-click this icon to **stop the timer** for a new call. You should always do this immediately after your computer has disconnected from the Net.

BillSaver Main window

BillSaver's Main Window pops up whenever you click BillSaver's icon in the system tray. You use this window to collect information about the current call status, its cost, monthly reports and limits that you have set, as well as to configure BillSaver. Please look below for a brief explanation of each of the dialog's items.
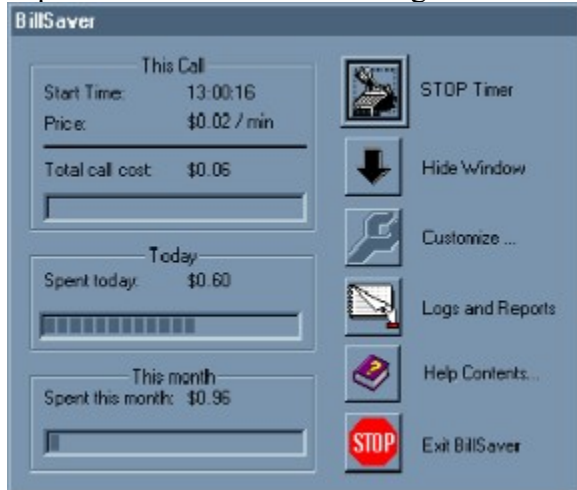
This Call

Call Start Time
　　Shows current call's start time (hh:mm:ss format) if BillSaver is currently logging a call, otherwise empty.

Call Price
　　Shows the cost of one minute on-line, with respect to the day of the week and time of the day. (See Customizing BillSaver for information on how to set the call price).

Total Call Cost
　　Shows the total cost of the current call (considering the current price and whether the call duration should be rounded) if BillSaver is currently logging a call, otherwise "0.00".

Call Limit progress bar
　　This progress bar shows how much of your call limit you have already spent during current call, and how much more you should be allowed to stay on-line. (See Customizing BillSaver for information on how to set the call limit).

Today

Spent Today
　　Shows the total cost of all calls made during this day. If no calls were made, shows "0.00".

Day Limit progress bar
　　This progress bar shows how much of your day limit you have already spent today, and how much more you should be allowed to stay on-line. (See Customizing BillSaver for information on how to set the day limit).

This Month

Spent This Month
　　Shows the total cost of all calls made during this month. If no calls were made, shows "0.00".

Month Limit progress bar

This progress bar shows how much of your month limit you have already spent, and how much more you should be allowed to stay on-line. (See Customizing BillSaver for information on how to set the month limit)

Buttons

Clicking this button has the same effect as left-clicking the BillSaver's icon in the system tray(see Interface). Use this button to indicate a start or an end of a particular call.

Clicking this button has the same effect as right-clicking the BillSaver's icon in the system tray(see Interface). Use this button to switch between background and foreground modes of running BillSaver.

Use this button to configure BillSaver. You can provide BillSaver with info. on the billing system that your telephone company uses, personal preferences, etc. Please see Customizing BillSaver for more information on customizing this program.

Click this button to view a complete log of all calls you have made during this month. You will also be shown a report containing information on the total amount of money you have spent **so far**, as well as and **estimated value** showing how much you are likely to spend this month in total, if you spending more or less the same amount of time surfing the Net every day. Please see Logs and Reports for more information.

This button invokes the BillSaver help file, which you are reading right now.

Click this button to exit BillSaver. PLEASE NOTE that since BillSaver can only log calls when it is running, it is highly unrecommended that you manually close BillSaver. Skipping some calls can produce unaccurate cost values, late limit warnings and misleading reports. It is suggested that you   click the "**Hide Window**" button instead, and let BillSaver run silently in the background.

Logs and Reports window

BillSaver saves a complete log of all calls you have made this month. This log file is in plain text format, look for a file *calls.log* in the directory where you have installed BillSaver. The contents of this file might look something similar to this:

```
-------------------------------------------------
                   August Log
-------------------------------------------------
Start:      09/08/97    13:00:04
End:        09/08/97    13:00:05

Start:      09/08/97    13:00:06
End:        09/08/97    13:00:07

Start:      09/08/97    13:00:08
End:        09/08/97    13:00:10
-------------------------------------------------
                  August Totals
-------------------------------------------------
Number of calls made:    13
Total on-line time:      00:04:39
Cost of all calls:       $0.90

Month limit for August you have set:$30.00
Status:      OK ! You are below your month limit.
-------------------------------------------------
```

As you see this file shows you start and end times of all calls you have made during the current month, as well as totals and whether you are currently below or above your month limit.
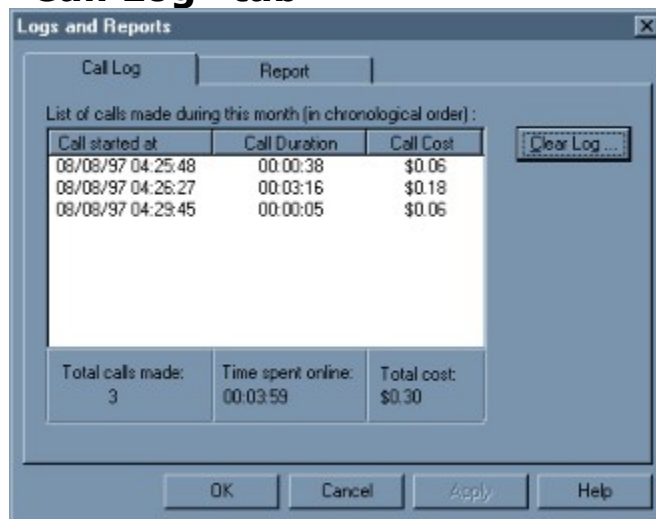
This log file is also accessible to you through the BillSaver interface, by selecting the "**Logs and Reports...**" button in BillSaver's Main Window.
A dialog pops up, containing 2 tabs:

Logs

Reports

"Call Log" tab

This tab shows you the starting time of all calls, their duration and their cost, which BillSaver calculates according to the billing system you have set. Fields below show the total number of calls you have made this month, their total duration and total cost.

The "**Clear Log**" button is provided, if for some reason you decide that you don't need statistics about the calls you have made previously this month. Clicking this button has the same effect as deleting the "*calls.log*" file from BillSaver's directory.

PLEASE NOTE: Normally you will never need to click the "**Clear Log**" button, since BillSaver automatically clears the log file at the beginning of each month. Before that, you are given a message asking whether you want to save your old log file. If you answer 'Yes', you will asked for a filename to save the log under, for your future references. The "*calls.log*" file will then be cleared and prepared for a new month.
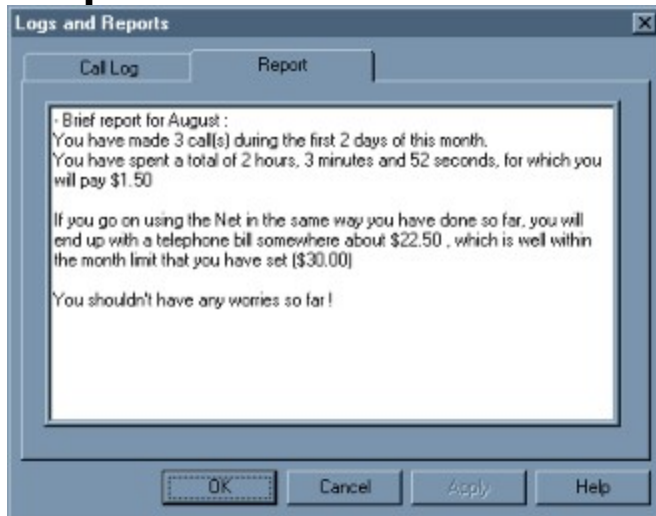
Jump to:
> **"Logs and Reports"** dialog overview
> "Call Log" tab
> "Report" tab

"Report" tab

This tab presents mostly the same information as the "Call Log" tab, but in more understandable manner. BillSaver generates a textual report, similar to the one above. However, in adition to to the information about calls already made, the report also shows the **estimated** amount of money you are likely to spend if you keep spending more or less the same amount of time surfing the Net every day.

Jump to:
>**"Logs and Reports"** dialog overview
>"Call Log" tab
>"Report" tab

Registration

PLEASE NOTE: Although you are currently using a fully-functional version of BillSaver without paying any money for it, BillSaver is **NOT freeware**, nor is it distributed as **public domain.**

BillSaver is marketed as **Shareware**. In case you don't know, shareware is a wonderful concept that allows You, the end user, to "try" a particular program before you actually "buy" it.

You have **30** days to evaluate and test this trial version of BillSaver, which is provided free of any charge, to see whether it suits your needs. By the end of that period you will either have to register this program for a small fee, if you would like to keep using it, or remove it from your system.

It's something like test-driving a car before you buy it. After you try it, you should either pay for the car, or return it !

"Why should I register BillSaver ?"
* You will receive the full latest version of BillSaver, which comes without any shareware reminders.
* You will receive FREE upgrades and bug fixes for this program, as well as special notifications when new interesting utilities will be developed.
* You will encourage me to continue developing similar Win95 utilities.

"OK, How much will it cost me to register BillSaver ?"
The good news is that BillSaver will only cost you as little as $15 (fifteen US dollars) or £10 (10 British pounds), whatever you prefer. Think about it: why not pay £10 for a program that will keep saving you huge amounts of money forever !

You will need to send me a copy of the registration form (see *form.txt*), either printed on paper, or by e-mail.
Please take a look at Contact Information for my postage address and e-mail.

"How can I pay for my copy of BillSaver ?"
You can send me a **cheque** for the sum stated above, or transfer the money directly into my bank account (please e-mail me for details of my bank account). If you select payment by cheque, before mailing it to me please make sure that it will be valid here in Iceland.

"How and When will I receive my copy of BillSaver ?"
You decide it yourself when you fill out the registration form. Of course the cheapest and fastest way would be if I simply send this program to you by e-mail. The whole registration process can be then done in 5 minutes, because I will e-mail you the full version of BillSaver just as soon as I receive the money from you.
The traditional method (sending the program to you on diskette) is, of course, also an option, but this will cost you a little more because of the prices of postage.

Please proceed to Contact Information for my postage address and e-mail.

Contact Information

My address:
```
Andrey Ermolinskiy
Höfðabraut 12
Akranes, 300
Iceland.
```
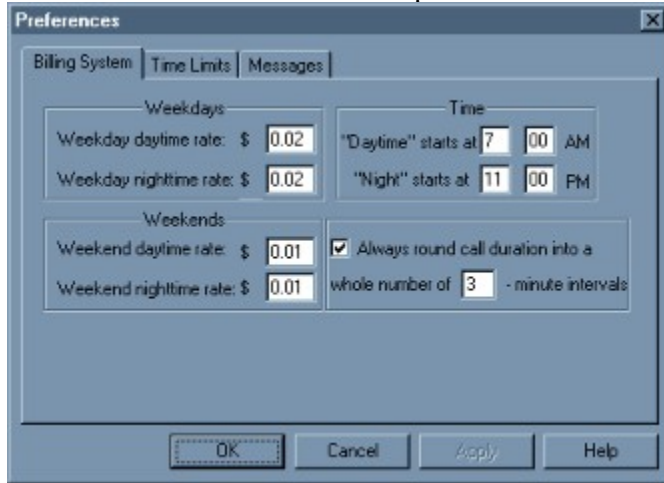
E-Mail:
```
ande@aknet.is
```

Tel, Fax:
```
(+354)-431-4442
```

"Billing" tab

This part of the "**Customize**" dialog box allows you to set various aspects of the billing system that BillSaver will use to calculate the amount of money you have spent while surfing the Net. Please look below for a brief explanation of each dialog item.

Weekday daytime rate:
Price charged for one minute of on-line time on **weekdays** (Monday-Friday).

Weekday night-time rate:
Price charged for one minute of on-line time on **weekdays during night**. Some telephone companies lower the cost of calls made during this period.

Weekend daytime rate:
Price charged for one minute of on-line time on **weekends** (Saturday-Sunday).

Weekday night-time rate:
Price charged for one minute of on-line time on **weekends during night**. Some telephone companies lower the cost of calls made during this period.

"Daytime starts at __ : __ AM "
"Night starts at __ : __ PM"
These items allow you to set the limits between **daytime** and **night** that are valid in place where you live. These values <u>have to be</u> set if the **night-time call cost** differs from the **daytime call cost**.

"Round call duration into __ - minute intervals"
Most telephone companies round the call duration into a whole number of *"intervals"*, each of them being 1 or more minutes long. So for example if you make a call lasting 00:09:15 and this value is being broken down into 3-minute intervals, you will be charged for 12 minutes (4*3=12).

Jump to:
Billing tab
<u>Limits tab</u>

<u>Messages tab</u>

"Limits" tab

Right after you begin using BillSaver you should decide on the amount of money you can afford to spend on surfing the Net. You can use this tab in the "**Customize**" dialog to enter your decisions. Please look below for a brief explanation of each dialog item.

Call Limit
> You can limit the total cost of your call to a certain value by entering this value into the **Call Limit** field. You should set this field to "0.0" if you don't want to have this limit.

"Warn me when I reach the call limit"
> Usually it is a good idea to select this checkbox, since otherwise you will not be notified when you have reached the **call limit** you have set.

Day Limit
> You can limit your daily Internet spendings to certain value by entering this value into the **Day Limit** field. You should set this field to "0.0" if you don't want to have this limit.

"Warn me when I reach the day limit"
> Usually it is a good idea to select this checkbox, since otherwise you will not be notified when you have reached the **day limit** you have set.

Month Limit
> Specify how much you can afford to spend on the Net monthly by entering your desired **month limit** into this field. You should set this field to "0.0" if you don't want to have this limit.

"Warn me when I reach the month limit"
> Usually it is a good idea to select this checkbox, since otherwise you will not be notified when you have reached the **month limit** you have set.

> **PLEASE NOTE:** It is highly recommended that you specify at least one of these 3 limits, since otherwise this program would lose its main purpose: **to balance your on-line time so that it would fit into a certain limit.**
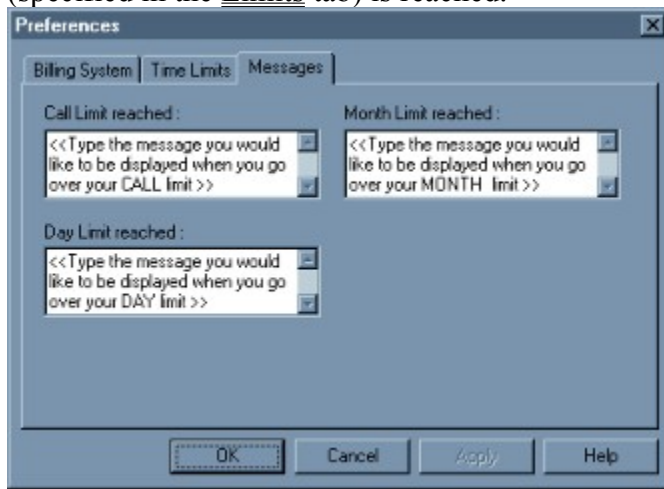
Jump to:

Billing tab
Limits tab
Messages tab

"Messages" tab

You can use this tab to customize messages you would like to receive when any of the limits (specified in the <u>Limits</u> tab) is reached.

Call Limit reaches:

This message will be shown to you when you reach the **call limit** you have set. Note that if you haven't set the call limit, you don't have to specify this message.

Day Limit reaches:

This message will be shown to you when you reach the **day limit** you have set. Note that if you haven't set the day limit, you don't have to specify this message.

Month Limit reaches:

This message will be shown to you when you reach the **call limit** you have set. Make sure that type something uplifting in this field ;-}

Jump to: