

NATIONAL WATER COMMISSION

BUSINESS POLICIES

Business policies are developed, based on normal commercial practices as well as the requirement of the National Water Commission Act. These Policies are intended to streamline the business practices of the NWC, to ensure consistency in its operations. Legislation in the form of the Fair Competition Act and Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) Act has also influenced the tone and contents of the Commission's Business Policies. The Business Policies are developed to conform to the Policy Direction Governing Quality of Service Standards as issued by the Office Of Utilities Regulation (the OUR).

The following are policies generally to be observed in the conduct of the Commission's business. They may be reviewed at any time to facilitate necessary changes in business practices, which require a policy decision.

The Business Policies have been approved by the Honourable Minister of Water and Housing and the Chairman and Board of the Commission. The Policies come into effect as at April 1, 2000.

BP/2000 - SERVICE CHARGE

All accounts, whether metered, or un-metered, shall be charged a monthly service charge as prescribed by the Commission. Only a termination of supply will cause a cessation of the service charge.

BP/2001 - DISCONNECTION

A supply is liable for disconnection for any amount outstanding for more than thirty days after the billing date. However, in the instance where a service is metered, no account shall be disconnected based solely on an estimated bill. The decision not to disconnect a supply rests with the District Manager, Regional General Manager, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer or the President. Decisions taken not to disconnect, when taken by the District Manager, must have the concurrence of the Regional General Manager within 48 hours.

BP/2002 - RE-CONNECTION

A supply shall be reconnected after payment in full of outstanding amounts plus the prescribed re-connection fee. In some instances, depending on the successful outcome of credit negotiations, a supply may be re-connected upon receipt of a mutually agreed portion of the outstanding amount plus the re-connection fee. In spite of the foregoing, any supply may be re-connected on instruction of the District Manager, Regional General Manager, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer or the President. Decisions taken to reconnect, when taken by the District Manager, must have the concurrence of the Regional General Manager within 48 hours.

BP/2003 - RE-CONNECTION FEE

Any supply disconnected for outstanding amounts shall require the payment of the prescribed re-connection fee before the supply is reconnected. This re-connection fee is in addition to other payments already described at BP/2002. The District Manager, the Regional General Manager, the Senior Vice President & Chief Operating Officer or the President may authorize a waiver of the reconnection fee.

BP/2004 - TERMINATION OF SUPPLY CONTRACT

A termination of contract can only be effected upon notice in writing by either the Commission or the customer, giving a month's notice in advance. Re-connection of supply after termination will incur new installation cost.

The disconnection of a supply for outstanding amounts or other specified charges does not constitute a termination of the customer's contract with the Commission.

BP/2005 - SUSPENSION OF SERVICE

The minimum suspension period offered by the Commission is six (6) months. Customers requiring a suspension of service may apply in writing to the Commission giving one month's notice prior to the start of the suspension.

Re-connection of supply after suspension of service will incur a reconnection fee.

The use of water on the property, during the period of suspension constitutes an illegal connection. The Commission reserves the right to take action accordingly.

BP/2006 - ILLEGAL RECONNECTION

Where a supply has been found to be illegally reconnected to the Commission's system, after being disconnected for rates or other specified charges, the Commission will apply associated charges for the water estimated to be consumed during that period, in addition to the applicable penalties. Payment must be made in full before the service is restored. Legal action may also be brought against such persons.

BP/2007 - ILLEGAL CONNECTION

Where it is discovered that an illegal connection has been made to the Commission's system, the Commission shall forthwith remove the connection. The illegal consumer shall be billed based on an assessment of usage and all effort made to collect, including legal action.

In the circumstance where the consumer wishes to become a legal customer, that request shall be granted only upon full settlement of the amount billed and the specified installation cost.

BP/2008 - DISCONNECTION FOR OUTSTANDING SEWERAGE RATES

Sewerage rates are deemed to be water rates and, accordingly, there is no distinction in treatment.

BP/2009 - NEW SUPPLIES

Where the Commission has a water supply system in any area, upon the request of a customer who meets the normal requirements for connection of service, the Commission will connect the property to said system. In areas where there is uncertainty of establishing new supplies, or a limited supply of water, the Commission shall inform the applicant of this uncertainty, prior to acceptance of application.

BP/2010 - CONTRACTING WITH OWNERS

In order to establish a new supply, the Commission requires the customer to present:

- (i) Proof of ownership – property title, affidavit (letter) from an Attorney, Mortgage Company or bank indicating volume and folio number or last tax receipt (applicable in rural areas only).
- (ii) Identification – Driver's License, Passport or National Identification.
- (iii) The specified deposit on installation cost
- (iv) A certificate of numbering from the Parish Council

Where the applicant is unable to provide proof of ownership and the NWC has identified the property to be an informal settlement, a special Contract may be offered on the following conditions:

- (i) The applicant must present a letter, confirming occupancy, from a Member of Parliament or Minister of Religion or Justice of the Peace, operating within the area
- (ii) The NWC will inspect the property to verify the conditions of occupancy
- (iii) The customer must sign the 'Informal Settlers' Contract and pay the required deposit on installation fees.

BP/2011 - CONTRACTING WITH TENANTS

Subject to the written authorization of a landlord and on condition that he is liable for all outstanding rates and charges, a tenant may enter into contract with the Commission for service. In all such contracts with tenants, the Commission holds the landlord liable for outstanding rates and charges.

BP/2012 - UN-METERED SUPPLY

At the sole discretion of the Commission, a premises may be supplied with water without the provision of a meter. In such instances, the account shall be billed for a quantum of water determined by the Commission to be representative of the average consumption for such premises and agreed to by the customer through the signing of a contract.

BP/2013 - METERED SUPPLY – RETROSPECTIVE BILLING

Where the Commission fails to read a meter, for any period greater than three (3) months then the amount owed to the Commission shall be determined by an actual meter reading, or the total value of the interim estimated bills, whichever is less.

BP2014 - CLASSIFICATION OF ACCOUNTS – GENERAL

An account shall be classified in accordance with the nature of the enterprise at which the water is consumed. In instances where there is dual usage, Domestic and Commercial/Industrial, the account shall be classified in accordance with the purpose for which the water is substantially used. Substantial use is deemed to be not less than two-thirds of total consumption.

BP/2015 - CLASSIFICATION OF ACCOUNTS – CHANGE OF USE

Where there is a change of use at a premises already supplied with water, the account shall be billed in accordance with the observed use from the date first observed by the Commission. The date of first observance must be brought to the attention of the customer.

In instances where a customer fraudulently represents to the Commission, an intended use of water and the Commission subsequently discovers otherwise, then the account shall be debited with the differential charge from the established date of the commencement of the fraud.

BP/2016 - TESTING OF METERS

Where a customer pays for the removal and testing of a meter, the Commission shall notify the customer five (5) days in advance for testing the meter. The customer has the right to witness the test. Should the customer neglect to witness the testing of the meter, he is obliged to accept the result of said testing exercise without further recourse.

BP/2017 - ACCURACY OF METERS

Where the quantity of water registered by a meter at normal flow is not more than 5% above or below the actual quantity passed, the meter shall be deemed to be accurate. The Commission will allow one accuracy test per account/meter per year free of charge to the customer. All other request for accuracy test will be done for a fee to be determined by the commission.

BP/2018 - FAULTY METERS

Where a meter is found to be inaccurate as defined above, discrepancies in consumption shall be adjusted to reflect the customer's normal usage, which shall be determined by the average of three months' consumption as recorded by a subsequent meter. The account shall also be credited with the difference in charges.

BP/2019 – BILLING DURING PERIODS OF NO SERVICE

Where the Commission willfully, or otherwise, discontinues service to a customer for an extended period for reasons other than disconnection for outstanding charges, the monthly amount billed to the customer shall be adjusted as follows:

- a. Fixed consumption:
 - (i) 10 consecutive days – a one-third ($1/3$) reduction.
 - (ii) 20 consecutive days – a two-thirds ($2/3$) reduction.
- b. Based on the discretion of the Regional General Manager.
- c. In accordance with actual meter reading where such exist.

BP/ - 2020 SEWERAGE CHARGES

Where the Commission constructs, extends or operates any sewerage system, the Commission shall, by a written notice served on the owner of the premises within the area where such sewerage system is available, require the owner to connect to the system within a specified notice period after completion of the system. The notice may also be by way of newspaper advertisement and must be published in the Jamaica Gazette not less than seven (7) days before coming into force.

All premises within one hundred yards from any connecting sewer shall be charged sewerage rates after the expiration of the specified notice period.

Premises may be exempted where:

- (i) it is physically impossible to connect to the Commission's system;
- (ii) insufficient capacity in the Commission's system.

BP/2021 - REFUND TO CUSTOMERS

The Commission may make cheque refund to a customer in the following circumstances only:

- a. Where duplicate payments are made.
- b. Where payment is made due to an error of fact by the Commission.
- c. Where payment has been made for bulk water purchase which was not delivered to the customer.
- d. Where so instructed by Policy Directive

BP/2022 - COLLECTION OF MONEY

No commercial office in the service of the Commission shall refuse payment from any customer where there is an outstanding balance on the customer's account. Field officers are not allowed to accept money unless duly authorized. Under no circumstance shall the Commission collect money from its customers without issuing a valid receipt.

BP/2023 - SALE OF WATER TO SHIPS

The sale of water to ships and other such crafts shall be in accordance with the gazetted rate structure, or as policy dictates from time to time. The quantity of water supplied shall be measured by a meter.

BP/2024 - COMMERCIAL ACCOUNTS – METERS

All commercial accounts shall be metered.

BP/2025 – REQUEST FOR SERVICE, CUSTOMER INQUIRIES AND PAYMENTS

Customers may make service request, make inquiries and make payments at any of the Commission's commercial office islandwide, regardless of the location of the premises and the Commission's employees shall respond to such requests.

BP/2026 - TIME LIMIT ON BILL INQUIRIES

All inquiries concerning a particular bill must be made within 90 days of billing date on said bill. Where an investigation is required, the customer's account shall be put on hold against disconnection for the portion of the bill being queried, throughout the period of investigation. The customer shall be required to pay the current bill or an amount agreed to, by both the customer and the Commission. If these amounts are not paid, the said supply may be disconnected.

BP/2027 EASEMENTS ON PROPERTIES

Negotiations with property owners for Easement, for the purpose of installing pipelines or tanks, shall not be on the basis of exchanging such easements for the supply of free water. A Customer Contract for water shall be independent of all other transactions with the customer.

Where such conditions exist, the Commission shall seek to formalize the agreement and compensate the customer for the land in order to establish a clear distinction between Billing for water consumed and Easements for infrastructure of any kind.