

The REGULATOR

Newsletter of the Office of Utilities Regulation

Vol. 3, No. 5

January - June 2005

Reading Your Meter

by: Marsha M. Minott – Analyst Consumer Relations

Meters are instruments that measure and register consumption. By knowing how to read your meter, you can track usage and verify utility bills. A consumer who knows how much water and energy is used can find ways to conserve and ultimately save money.

Reading your meter is quite simple. The following diagrams illustrate how to record readings from your JPS and NWC meters.

Reading Your JPS Meter

Electricity is measured in Kilowatt-hours (kWh).

- Your JPS meter may consist of four (4) or five (5) dials.
- The pointers "hands" indicate the reading on each dial.
- If a pointer is between two (2) numbers, the LOWER number should be recorded.

For Example...



The meter above reads 35152. To determine how much electricity is used since your last bill,

subtract your previous reading (actual/estimated) as indicated on your last bill, from your current meter reading.

Example: Current Reading = 35152

Previous Reading = 34720

Kilowatt hours = 432

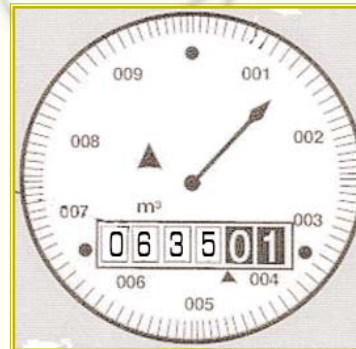
This represents the amount of electricity used since the previous reading was obtained. Dividing the kWh used by the number of days between readings gives the average daily kWh consumption. If you suspect that your meter is malfunctioning, you should contact your service provider to have it checked.

Reading Your NWC Meter

Your water usage may be billed in either thousands of gallons or litres.

The digital dial on your water meter is read from left to right. To determine how much water is used for a period, subtract the reading on your last bill from the current reading taken.

Example: (Metric Meter)



Cont'd on pg. 2

Also Inside This Issue

- Expanding Jamaica's Options for Submarine Fibre Optic Connection
- Energy Tip
- FAQs

The REGULATOR

Staff

Members of the Office

- J. Paul Morgan** - Director General
- C. Courtney Jackson** - Deputy Director General, Telecommunications
- Raymond Silvera** - Deputy Director General, Electricity

Senior Managers

- David Geddes** - Director, Consumer and Public Affairs
- Maurice Charvis** - Director, Analysis and Research
- George Wilson** - General Counsel
- Ansord Hewitt** - Manager, Regulatory Affairs
- Carolyn Young-Scott** - Director Administration/HR
- Brian Sale** - Financial Controller

Editorial Team

David Geddes . Denise McCalla . Marsha Minott

Graphic Design & Layout
Dynamic Images

OUR'S Objectives

- To ensure that consumers of utility services enjoy an acceptable quality of service at reasonable cost.
- To establish and maintain transparent, consistent and objective rules for the regulation of utility service providers.
- To promote the long-term efficient provision of utility services for national development consistent with Government policy.
- To provide an avenue of appeal for consumers who have grievances with the utility service providers.
- To work with other related agencies in the promotion of a sustainable environment.
- To act independently and impartially.

Reading Your Meter

contd. from pg. 1

The example indicates that your current reading is 635 (Only the numbers in the white area should be taken). If your previous reading was 630, then you have used 5,000 litres over the period.

Detecting Leaks

Unusually high consumption may indicate the presence of a leak. If your meter continues to register (evidence of movement) when all faucets, taps have been closed, then a leak exists. If the cause of the leak cannot be determined, you may need to engage the services of a plumber.

Interesting Facts!!

A leaking toilet can waste from 30 to 500 gallons of water per day!

Faucet Leakage Rates:

<i>Drips</i>			
60 drops per minute	=	192	gallons per month
90 " " "	=	310 " "	
120 " " "	=	429 " "	

Estimated Billing for JPS and NWC

Customers' meters are to be read at least once every two months. In the event that a reading is not done, an estimate reflecting the average of the last three (3) actual readings should be used to bill the account. The revised Guaranteed Standards of 2004 stipulate that consumers should not receive more than two consecutive estimated bills. The receipt of three or more consecutive estimated bills constitutes a breach of the standard and affected customers should contact their service provider to claim the relevant compensation.

Penalties

- NWC - four times (4) the applicable service charge
- JPS - householders accounts - \$1000.00
- commercial accounts - \$8,400.00

The REGULATOR

3

Expanding Jamaica's Options for Submarine Fibre Optic Connection

By Ansord Hewitt - Regulatory Affairs Manager

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) responding to a directive from the Minister of Commerce, Science and Technology issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) in August 2004 inviting applications for two licences to build and operate additional fibre optic cable facilities in Jamaica. The decision to issue the invitation for licences reflected both the policy makers' and the OUR's concerns that Jamaica faces a critical shortage of submarine fibre optic facilities for both current and projected demand.

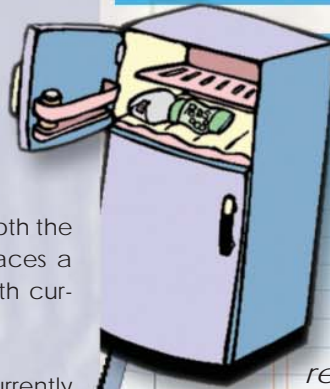
Specifically, it was felt that the 2.5 Gbps of capacity currently provided by Cable and Wireless Jamaica (C&WJ), the country's only provider of this service, is inadequate to meet the demand from the rapidly growing domestic and international voice and data markets. Additionally, there was also the concern that the prices for services delivered through ownership of international fibre facilities (international leased lines, broad band internet access, and a range of applications delivered through international telecommunications) were being kept artificially high by the shortage of facilities and the lack of diversity in ownership. A direct result of this is that Jamaica is relatively uncompetitive in regional markets for telecommunication services, and access to the internet by the vast majority of Jamaicans is being stifled.

Applications were submitted by Digicel, Trans Caribbean Communications Network (TCCN) a company made up of a consortium of local and international operators and Fibralink a company related to Caribbean Crossing which operates out of the Bahamas. The applications were processed and reviewed by the OUR and a report setting out the OUR's recommendations for awarding the two licences were submitted to the Minister at the end of the year.

All applicants presented proposals that would significantly advance the policy objectives outlined. Fibralink and TCCN in that order achieved higher scores on the basis of the established criteria, however, and were thus awarded licences.

The OUR is of the view that the grant of the additional licences will significantly improve the survivability and reliability of Jamaica's international fibre optic links. There is already some indication that prices may trend downward even before this, as C&WJ recently announced significant reductions in the charges for some of these services.

Energy Saving Tip



* *Ensure that your refrigerator door seals are airtight to prevent hot air from entering.*

Currently, the price for minimum broadband (ADSL) access (i.e. approximately 128 kbps) in Jamaica is US\$45 monthly, down from US\$65.95 in late 2004. With the introduction of additional providers in the market, the price for broadband access is expected to be reduced by more than a half over the next year. This reduction in price is expected to increase the penetration of internet access in households across the island.

The OUR now sees the potential for Jamaica to be located at the centre of an international communication web joining North America, South America and the rest of the Caribbean. Moreover the greater resilience of Jamaica's telecommunications linkages gained from the additional facilities should generate increased confidence in the country's capacity to keep international telecommunications intact even in the face of natural disasters. Such developments among others, are expected to significantly improve the country's prospects for the location of a number of offshore business operations.

The REGULATOR

FAQS

Ask the OUR

Q. Can a utility company disconnect my service for an estimated bill?

A. Yes. An estimated bill is a legitimate bill and should be paid. The estimated bill should however be based on the average consumption of the last three (3) actual meter readings, as stipulated by the Guaranteed Standards.

OUR's Role

The Office of Utilities Regulation Act of 1995 established the Office of Utilities Regulation (the Office/OUR) as a body corporate. Under the Act, the OUR is charged with the responsibility of regulating the provision of utility services in the following sectors:

- Electricity
- Telecommunications
- Water
- Sewerage
- Public transportation by road, rail and ferry.

Consumer Relations Unit (CRU)

The Consumer Relations Unit (CRU) is a part of the Consumer and Public Affairs Department of the OUR. The CRU interfaces with the public on a daily basis. The unit advises consumers about the Guaranteed Standards, reviews, investigates and resolves consumer issues that have been brought to the OUR's attention via letters, telephone calls and visits by affected consumers.

We live by our creed:

Together We Educate & Protect Consumers

Garfield Bryan
Manager

If you have received unsatisfactory service from a utility company (electricity, water, telephone), you may be entitled to a compensatory payment from the respective company. Contact the Consumer and Public Affairs Department of the OUR or fill out a complaint form available at post offices islandwide.

If you have questions about the role of The OUR or would like us to speak at any Community, Church or Citizens Association meetings, Contact: **David Geddes**-Director, Consumer and Public Affairs. 3rd Floor, PCJ Resource Centre, 36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10. **Toll free:** 1888-Call OUR. **Email:** dgeddes@our.org.jm

Contact

3rd floor PCJ Resource Centre
36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10
Tel: (876) 968-6053-4
Toll free 1888-Call-OUR (2255-687)
Fax: 929-3635.
E-mail: consumer@our.org.jm
Website address: www.our.org.jm

OUR + Utility Providers + Informed Consumers = Quality Service