

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OUR gives JPS 3-month stay for Guaranteed Standards automatic compensation

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2016 June 9): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) on June 1, responding to an urgent request from the Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS), granted the Company three more months to change the final four (4) Guaranteed Standards (GS) from 'claim' to 'automatic' compensation. The new date for effecting this change is now 2016 September 1.

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) had determined that in keeping with Condition 17 of the All Island Electric Licence (2011), breaches of all GS would attract automatic compensation. Therefore, it directed JPS, in its 2014-2019 Tariff Determination, that as at 2016 June 1, affected customers would no longer be required to submit a claim form to receive compensation when a breach has occurred.

JPS advised the OUR on May 31, however, that it needed more time to address specific issues that have an impact on its ability to make the standards automatic. Among the issues cited by JPS are: post implementation issues from previous changes of other standards from 'claim' to 'automatic' compensation; technical difficulties specific to the use of RAMI meters; and the need for additional consultation with the OUR. The company requested a four (4) month delay from 2016 June 1 to 2016 October 1.

After careful deliberations, and indicating to JPS its disappointment with the development of these internal issues, the OUR decided to grant an extension of three (3) months, ending 2016 August 31. The approved delay recognised the realities of the difficulties that JPS indicated and is intended to allow for completion of all technical and other work necessary for the conversion to take effect without resulting in disruption and inconvenience to customers.

The OUR reiterates that notwithstanding the grant of this extension, JPS is bound to honour claims submitted for any breaches of these standards. Customers are therefore encouraged to continue to make timely claims in order to be appropriately compensated for breaches by JPS. The OUR apologises to consumers for the late stay of effectiveness of the automatic compensation and will continue to remind customers during the approved three month period of their need to make the necessary claims.

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The remaining JPS Guaranteed Standards which will attract automatic compensation as at 2016 September 1 are:

- **EGS3 – Response to emergency** - JPS should respond to emergency calls within five (5) hours – emergencies include: broken wires, broken poles and fires.
- **EGS 5(a) – Acknowledgements** - JPS must acknowledge written queries within five (5) working days.
- **EGS 5(b) – Investigations** - JPS must complete investigations and respond to a customer within thirty (30) working days. Where investigations involve a 3rd party, same is to be completed within sixty (60) working days.
- **EGS 7 – Estimated Bills** - Customers should NOT receive more than two (2) consecutive estimated bills where the company has access to the meter.

Despite granting JPS the additional time, OUR remains focused on utility consumers receiving the prescribed level of service mandated by the Guaranteed Standards.

BACKGROUND

The Guaranteed Standards are performance measures that guide the provision of utility services delivered by the JPS, the National Water Commission and small water providers.

The current JPS tariff (2014-2019) includes seventeen (17) Guaranteed Standards. These provide guidelines for service delivery in the areas of: access to service, investigation of customer complaints, billing, metering, disconnection and reconnection of service. Breaches of the Guaranteed Standards by the utility provider attract compensation which is paid to its customers' accounts. Compensation is paid either by a customer submitting a claim, or by the utility automatically applying the compensation once the breach has been verified.

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