

JPS delivers action plan to fix April 2016 Outage issues

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2017 January 23): The Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS) has submitted an action plan to the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) outlining its strategy to address the problems which caused the widespread power outage in 2016 April.

JPS reported that on Sunday 2016 April 17, 547,734 customers were affected by the outage which was caused by a major system failure and that service was progressively restored.

The submission of the action plan follows several directives and recommendations issued by the OUR to the JPS in 2016 November, as to how it can improve its systems and prevent such future occurrences. The OUR had also instructed JPS to provide it with an action plan on the implementation of all of its recommendations which should include specific time frames for their completion and associated implementation costs.

In its report sent to the OUR in 2017 January, JPS outlined its responses to the OUR's recommendations and its action plan. These include systems and training that will be put in place to ensure that all major transmission maintenance outages are properly planned and coordinated to reduce the system exposure to security risks; training of its relevant staff including managers on outage management; increasing complement and improving competence of protection system staff; and implementing a system for upgrading, maintaining, testing and management of critical equipment.

JPS also outlined a schedule for implementing each corrective measure, indicating the costs and constraints where applicable.

The OUR will be monitoring the implementation of the corrective measures to ensure the problems identified are addressed in a timely and effective manner, thereby reducing the probability of a recurrence.

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BACKGROUND

On Sunday 2016 April 17 at 6:59 pm, the electric power system experienced a major system failure which separated the power grid into two sub-systems namely; corporate and rural area subsystems. The rural area eventually suffered a total blackout, while the corporate area survived after intermittently losing some of its customers.

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JPS reported that there was a planned outage of the two 69 kV transmission lines, Hunts Bay-Port Authority of Jamaica and Hunts Bay-Duhaney, on that day. The outage was planned to facilitate road works being under taken by the National Works Agency. The two lines emanated from the Hunts Bay power station in the Corporate Area, the largest load centre on the island.

The planned outage was to start at 7:00 am to be completed at 6:00 pm, before the onset of the evening peak load period, but did not start until 10:55 am, an almost four-hour delay. The event that triggered the outage and power grid separation which led to the blackout of the rural area, occurred when the Hunts Bay-Three Miles line became over loaded and tripped. This precipitated a number of cascading events, which resulted in the total black out of the rural area and the partial black out of the Corporate Area.

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