

OUR Gives NWC Go-ahead for Payment Compliance Initiative

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; July 29, 2015): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) has given the National Water Commission (NWC), the go-ahead to implement an initiative which will see customers being offered an incentive for paying their bills in full and on time, and a charge to be applied to accounts where bills are paid after the due date.

The approval of the NWC's \$250.00 Early Payment Incentive/Late Payment Fee initiative, follows a directive issued to the NWC by the OUR on July 14, 2015, to halt this process after it was started without the OUR's approval.

The OUR, having completed its review of the NWC's proposal, has directed that this initiative take effect on August 27, 2015, giving customers thirty (30) days' notice before it is implemented.

NWC has proposed that the Early Payment Incentive/Late Payment Fee be applicable to residential, commercial and condominium customers and will consist of the following two components:

- An Early Payment Incentive of \$250.00 which will reward customers who make full/total payments on, or before, the stipulated due dates.
- A Late Payment Fee of \$250.00 which will become applicable on the day following the due date where the account has not been settled in full.

In its decision, the OUR also gave its non-objection to the application of a nine-day grace period before the NWC effects disconnection of service, where bill payments are not received by the due date.

The OUR has additionally directed that:

- The late payment fee should not apply to customers who are disconnected. Such customers should only pay the reconnection fee.
- The supply should not be disconnected during the approved nine (9) days' grace period.
- The NWC must use the receipt date for payments made at payment agencies to determine the applicability of the Early Payment Initiative/Late Payment Fee to an account.
- Only pre-paid accounts and accounts with payment arrangements are to be automatically exempted from the Early Payment Incentive/Late Payment Fee initiative.

OUR Gives NWC Go-ahead...(cont'd)

In its letter to the NWC on July 14, 2015, the OUR requested an update on the water company's bill notification system. In its response, the NWC outlined the various means through which it alerts customers of their bill amounts, including via text messages, emails, regular mail service, contractor delivery, an Interactive Voice Response system, its call centre and its website. The OUR will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these methods. It is also encouraging customers to be vigilant in exploring the various avenues available to ensure they get a detailed copy of their bills every month.

The full copy of the OUR's Determination Notice can be found on its website: www.our.org.jm.

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