

OUR to Set up Help Desk at Denbigh

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; July 29, 2014): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) returns to Denbigh this year. The OUR will be setting up a tent at the Denbigh 62nd Agricultural Industrial and Food Show, August 1-3, 2014. The main feature under the OUR's tent will be a help desk to assist attendees with any issues they may have with their utility companies.

The OUR's presence will provide an opportunity for customers of utility services to:

- Receive advice on problems being experienced with their service provider,
- Learn more about the Guaranteed Standards and how customers can claim for any breach
- Understand how to read their bills and meters and,
- Learn how to make appeals to the OUR.
- Learn about the role of the OUR

Members of the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) of the OUR will be manning the help desk over the three days. The CAU is the unit in the OUR that is charged with providing an avenue of appeal for utility customers through a systematic, objective, impartial and transparent process. Utility customers will also be given copies of the NWC and JPS Guaranteed Standards which contain the standards to which the utility companies are held accountable, as any breach will result in compensation to the affected customer.

Bringing the CAU to Clarendon during the traditionally well-attended Denbigh show adds tremendous value to Jamaicans as this provides a welcome opportunity for the team to directly engage utility customers outside of the office environment.

Data indicate that most consumers are not claiming for breaches of the Guaranteed Standards for the Jamaica Public Service (JPS), National Water Commission (NWC) and small water providers. As indicated by the table, there remains a significant disparity between the amount actual paid out for breaches of the NWC and JPS Guaranteed Standards, and the potential payout.

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PAYOUT UNDER GUARANTEED STANDARDS

(data provided by utility companies)

<u>2013</u>	<u>JPS [Oct-Dec 2013]</u>	<u>NWC [July-Sept 2013]</u>
Potential Payout	JM\$32m	JM\$4m
Actual Payout	JM\$480,000	JM\$69,000

Director of Consumer and Public Affairs at the OUR, Yvonne Grinam Nicholson, says, 'Denbigh has always drawn a huge crowd, and while many of the booths will be showcasing products, we wanted to offer a valuable service. So we want residents of Clarendon and others who will be visiting, who may have issues with a utility company, to come by our booth and let us help you resolve any problems you may have.'

A recent OUR-commissioned National Consumer Survey 2014 revealed that numerous utility customers are unaware of the Guaranteed Standards. The help desk at the Denbigh Show is one of the measures being used by the OUR to educate and empower consumers.

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