

STATEMENT ON QUALITY OF SERVICE STANDARDS SCHEME FOR NATIONAL WATER COMMISSION

The Office of Utilities Regulation has carefully considered all the comments received and has taken them into account in making a final decision on the quality of service standards for National Water Commission. The following is a statement of the quality of service standards scheme for the National Water Commission. The general features of the scheme are outlined below. Table A summarizes the overall standards while the standards which should be converted to guaranteed standards in 2001, are presented in Table B. This is followed by a detailed description of the standards. The codes of the standards have been changed to WOS for overall standards and WGS for guaranteed standards for consistency in codes across the different utilities.

A set of quality of service standards for the National Water Commission will be introduced in 2000 January at which time, monitoring by NWC will commence. NWC will be required to start reporting to the OUR on the standards in 2000 April. After a minimum period of one year, some of the standards will be converted to guaranteed standards as shown in Table B. Hence, some standards, as determined by the consultation, will remain as overall standards, while others will begin to require compensation payment by NWC to consumers when they have been breached.

NWC will be required to educate the public about the quality of service standards scheme on the implementation of the guaranteed standards scheme in 2001 April. The scheme should be promoted on at least one radio and one television programme. Details of the scheme and the standards should be circulated to consumers on leaflets in their bills, and brochures about the scheme and the standards should be available at all NWC offices. Circulation of these leaflets should be repeated at least every four to six months.

It is expected that with the implementation of the guaranteed standards in 2001, NWC will have the necessary systems in place to allow for automatic compensation to consumers. Hence, most of the standards will require NWC to make automatic payments to customers when the standard is breached, but customers will be required to claim for compensation for particular standards, especially where NWC is unable to determine the affected customer(s). Claims should be made within three (3) months of the breach. However, the OUR and NWC have agreed that the decision on automatic compensation versus claims will be reviewed prior to implementation of the guaranteed standards scheme in 2001.

Payments for breach of guaranteed standards will be credited to customers' accounts. The message on the bill will be labeled "compensation for breach of guaranteed standard".

The compensation payment for domestic customers will be the same as the service charge to domestic customers, which is currently approximately \$100. The payment to commercial customers will be the same as the charge that is paid by this group of customers, which currently ranges from approximately \$200 to \$3000. These are the amounts that will be paid for all the guaranteed standards.

All compensatory payments are to be made within 60 days of:

1. the date the standard was breached, for automatic payments; or
2. the date the claim was received, for claimed payments

However, even where the onus is on NWC to compensate automatically, customers who believe that an automatic payment was due and had not been paid, can make a claim, within three (3) months of the breach.

The first review of the guaranteed standards scheme will be in 2003, two (2) years after implementation. At that time a decision will be taken on whether an adjustment in the level of standard or compensation amount is needed. However, the aim is for the compensation to always be the same as the service charge.

Since the overall standards do not attract compensatory payments, NWC's performance against the overall standards will be taken into account at tariff reviews.

NWC is required to provide quarterly (with monthly breakout) quality of service standards reports, indicating their performance against the standards as outlined in the Office of Utilities Regulation - Regulatory Framework for the National Water Commission 1999 - 2001.

The OUR, via its Consumer Affairs Department, will inform consumers of NWC's performance with

regard to quality of service, by publishing relevant information on an annual and biannual basis.

Force Majeure conditions and exemptions from Standards

The Guaranteed Standards Scheme will be suspended in circumstances where compliance is beyond the control of NWC. The OUR must be promptly notified by the NWC in all cases of suspension or proposed suspension of the scheme indicating the exact duration of such suspension. The burden of proof of exceptional circumstance will lie with NWC. Examples of possible exceptional events are:

- bad weather or natural disaster
- system conditions such as major breakdown of treatment plants or pumping stations
- Drought
- Civil unrest
- Strikes; and
- Malicious destruction of property

On receiving the concurrence of the OUR that a force majeure condition exists, NWC will use appropriate means to advise customers. NWC must also make the necessary effort to restore a normal service to its customers as quickly as possible.

Table A: OVERALL STANDARDS

CODE	FOCUS	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
WOS1	Water Quality	Testing samples for impurities	To ensure that water is within standards as specified by MOH
WOS2	Water Pressure	Minimum/maximum water pressure	Must maintain a pressure ranging from 20 to 60 psi
WOS3	Reliability of supply	Notify public of intention to interrupt supply – planned interruptions	Minimum notification time of 12 hours for short interruptions (not more than 4 hours) and 24 hours for longer interruptions (more than 4 hours)
WOS4	Sewerage	Correction of sewerage problems	Maximum of 24 hours to correct sewerage problems, after being informed
WOS5	Sewage	Sewerage effluent quality	Ensure that sewerage effluent is within the standards specified by NRCA
WOS6	Water meters	Changing meters	NWC must provide consumers with details of the date of the change, meter readings on the day and serial numbers of the new meter

Table B: GUARANTEED STANDARDS

CODE	FOCUS	DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
WGS1	Access	Connection to supply	Maximum time of 10 working days
WGS2	Delivery of bills	Issue of first bill	Maximum time of 48 working days after connection
WGS3	Appointments	Keeping appointments	Must notify customer prior to appointed time, if cannot keep appointment.
WGS4	Complaints	Response to complaints not bill related	Maximum of 5 working days to acknowledge customer complaints, after receipt. Maximum time of 30 working days to complete investigation and respond, from date of receipt of complaint
WGS5	Complaints	Response to billing complaints	Maximum of 5 working days to acknowledge customer complaints, after receipt. Maximum time of 30 working days to complete investigation and respond, from date of receipt of complaint
WGS6	Account status	Issue of account status	Meter to be read on same day customer is moving, if on a weekday (within 2 days of move if on a weekend) providing 5 days notice of move is given. Maximum time of 48 working days to provide final bill after move
WGS7	Reliability of supply	Restoration after emergency lock-off	Maximum time of 24 hours to restore supply in urban areas. Maximum of 48 hours in rural areas.
WGS8	Water meters	Meter installation	Maximum of 30 working days to install meter on customer's request
WGS9	Water meters	Repair or replacement of faulty meters	Maximum time of 40 working days to repair or replace meter after being informed
WGS10	Water meters	Meter reading	Maximum of 3 months between each meter reading and between bill issues
WGS11	Reconnection	Reconnection after payment of overdue amount	Maximum of 24 hours to restore supply in urban areas. Maximum of 48 hours to restore supply in rural areas.
WGS12	Compensation	Payment of compensation	Maximum of 60 working days to make payment when it becomes due

QUALITY OF SERVICE STANDARDS FOR NWC

Overall Standards

Drinking Water Quality

Objective: To ensure that the water supplied is always of the highest quality and fit for consumption.

WOS1 - Testing samples for impurities

Definition: It is the duty of the NWC to make periodical analyses of water samples to ensure quality. NWC is required to take any water samples necessary for analysis and check if the samples are within the standards specified by The Ministry of Health (MOH) Environment Control Division. 100% of all samples should meet the required standards.

Water Pressure

Objective: NWC is required to maintain a pressure in the pipes that will ensure that customers receive an adequate supply of water.

WOS2 - Minimum/Maximum water pressure

Definition: NWC should ensure that the pressure of water supplied to consumers is within the range of 20 to 60 psi. During drought conditions, NWC should repeatedly advise customers of areas affected by low pressure or no supply and this standard will be waived for the period that the drought persists.

Reliability of Supply

Objective: To minimize interruptions to supply for planned work

WOS3 - Notice of planned work

Definition: NWC is required to let customers know at least 24 hrs. beforehand, if they need to turn off the water supply for more than 4 hrs. and when it will be turned on again. NWC also has to give at least 12 hrs. notice of work that is expected to last between 1 and 4 hrs. If NWC cannot restore water supply at the specified time, they will let the public know. NWC will notify the public preferably in writing, e.g. in at least one newspaper. If time does not permit, a notice on at least one radio or television station will suffice.

The required notification time should be given for at least 90% of planned interruptions, (for work of duration not more than 4 hours as well as those of duration more than 4 hours).

Sewerage

Objective: To ensure acceptable effluent quality and minimize flooding from sewers.

WOS4 - Correction of sewerage problems

Definition: NWC must correct all problems, which result in flooding from sewers, within 24 hours of being informed.

WOS5 - Testing effluent samples

Definition: NWC is required to periodically take any effluent samples necessary for analysis and check if the samples are within the standards specified by The Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA). 99% of all samples should meet the required standards.

Water Meters

Objective: To ensure that customers are promptly provided with a properly functioning meter.

WOS6 - Changing meters

Definition: If NWC needs to change a customer's meter, they are required to leave written details of the date of the change, meter readings (of old and new meters) on the day and serial numbers of the new meter.

Guaranteed Standards

Access

Objective: To ensure that new customers are promptly connected to NWC's system.

WGS1 - Connection to Supply

Definition: NWC is required to connect all new customers, where water supply is available at the property boundary, within 10 working days after signing the contract for connection.

Guarantee: If NWC fails to connect a customer within the specified period, NWC will automatically compensate the customer

Delivery of Bills

Objective: To ensure that new customers receive first bill, in a timely manner.

WGS2 - Issue of First Bill

Definition: NWC must issue (print and mail) a bill to a new customer within 48 days after connection.

Guarantee: If NWC fails to issue a bill within the specified period, NWC will automatically compensate the customer.

Appointments

Objective: To minimize the inconvenience to customers of having to wait for NWC's representatives to attend appointments.

WGS3 - Keeping appointments

Definition: NWC has a responsibility to satisfy a request for a representative to visit the customer's premises, to deal with an identifiable problem and should let the customer know whether the visit will be before or after 12 noon. NWC must guarantee to keep all appointments or to notify the customer prior to the appointed time, if an emergency prevents them from keeping the appointment.

Guarantee: If for any reason NWC does not keep an appointment it has made with a customer or does not give notice of a change, it will automatically compensate the customer. If the customer does not keep the appointment, s/he will not be entitled to payment on the subsequent rescheduled appointment.

Complaints

Objective: To ensure that, customers' complaints (written, by telephone or in person) are dealt with promptly and satisfactorily by NWC.

WGS4 - Response to complaints not related to billing

(Complaints not related to billing include, faulty meters, low pressure, poor water quality)

Definition: If a complaint is made in writing to the NWC, NWC must acknowledge the complaint (have a letter prepared for dispatch to the customer) within 5 working days after receipt of complaint and a reply to the customer should be made in writing within 30 working days of receipt.

NWC is required to take details of complaints made by telephone or in person, at the time of the call or visit. If the complaint has to be investigated, NWC will still be required to provide an answer within 30 working days of receipt.

Guarantee: If NWC does not meet the specified time, the customer will automatically receive compensation

WGS5 - Response to complaints about billing matters

Definition: NWC is required to acknowledge complaint within 5 working days and reply to all complaints whether written or by phone regarding bills within 30 working days of receiving the inquiry.

Guarantee: If NWC does not, the customer will automatically receive compensation

Account status

Objective: To ensure that a customer moving from a premises receives bill for relevant consumption.

WGS6 - Account status request

Definition: If a customer is moving and requests an account status and/or service to cease, NWC is required to read the customer's meter on the day the customer is moving, if on a working day, as long as (5) working days notice of the move is given to NWC. If the customer is moving on a weekend, NWC

should read the meter within two (2) days of the move. NWC is also required to provide the relevant bill within 48 working days of the customer's moving.

Guarantee: If NWC does not, the customer will automatically receive compensation

Reliability of Supply

Objective: To minimize interruptions to supply for unplanned work (emergencies)

WGS7 - Restoration after emergency lock-off

Definition: If there is a burst water main or other emergency, NWC may not be able to warn customers that water will be off. NWC should, however, inform customers by making announcements on at least one radio station within 2 hours after interruption. NWC will be required to provide an alternative supply of water if necessary (trucking water to affected areas), and to restore supply within 24 or 48 hours (for urban or rural customers, respectively).

Guarantee: If NWC does not meet the specified time, customers can claim compensation by letter. Claims should be made within 3 months of the incident.

Water Meters

Objective: To ensure that customers are promptly provided with a properly functioning meter, which is read at regular intervals.

WGS8 - Meter installation

Definition: NWC is required to fit a meter, where an un-metered customer requests one, within 30 working days of receiving the customer's order.

Guarantee: If NWC does not, the customer will automatically receive compensation.

WGS9 - Repair or replacement of faulty meters

Definition: If a customer's meter is verified as faulty, NWC will repair or replace it within 40 working days of being informed by the customer, after verification by NWC, or within 40 working days after detection by NWC if the fault was discovered by NWC.

Guarantee: If NWC does not, the customer will automatically receive compensation.

WGS10 - Meter reading

Definition: NWC has the responsibility to provide at least one bill every three months and will guarantee to read customers' meters at least once every three months as long as it can be accessed. (NWC should make arrangements to relocate inaccessible meters)

Guarantee: If NWC does not, the customer will automatically receive compensation

Reconnection

Objective: To encourage prompt reconnection of customers after payment of overdue amounts

WGS11- Reconnection after payment of overdue amounts

Definition: NWC is required to reconnect customers, whose supply has been locked off for debt and who have settled their accounts, within 24 or 48 hours (for urban or rural customers, respectively) after debt settlement.

Guarantee: if NWC does not, the customer will automatically receive compensation.

Compensation

Objective: To ensure that the value of the compensation is not undermined by late receipt of payment.

WGS12 - Payment of Compensation (to be introduced in 2001 April)

Definition: NWC is required to make payments that are due under the Guaranteed Standards scheme within 60 days of

1. the date the standard was breached, for automatic payments; or
2. the date the claim was received, for claimed payments

Guarantee: If the payment due under a particular standard is not paid within the specified period, the customer will automatically receive compensation. This will repeat itself for subsequent periods until payment is made.

Breach of the individual standards will, however, attract only one payment.