

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OUR Issues Directive to JPS on Billing Cycle

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2021 May 17): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) has issued a Directive to the Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS) to start submitting quarterly reports on data on meter readings for residential customers that fall outside of +/- 30% of the average previous readings. The Report should also include the methods employed by JPS to notify customers of any significant variance in their consumption. The Exception Reports are to be submitted to the OUR twenty (20) working days after the end of every quarter, commencing twenty (20) working days following 2021 June 30.

In addition, the OUR, by letter dated 2021 April 29 and as a follow up to an OUR report issued in 2020 October, asked JPS to provide a report on the reasons for its failing to notify its customers between 2014 August to 2020 June, of the significant variance in consumption. This is provided for in the *OUR's Decision: Enquiry into Billing Systems of the Jamaica Public Service Limited* dated 2005 February 22 (the Exceptions Criteria). JPS is required to outline the corrective action(s) and the measures taken to prevent a recurrence of its non-compliance with the Exceptions Criteria.

The OUR has also requested that JPS submit a report on the corrective and preventative measures taken to comply with the billing period restrictions as stipulated in a 2008 October 10 Memorandum issued to the company by the OUR.

The Memorandum stipulates that JPS should ensure that no **estimated** bills are issued to customers on the basis of a billing period exceeding thirty days, and that it must ensure that 99% of bills based on **actual** meter readings, reflect usage no greater than a billing period of 31 days.

Both reports are to be submitted by 2021 June 25.

Background

These developments follow an OUR investigation into JPS customers' complaints of high bill/consumption since the 2020 April billing period. The finding of this investigation was issued in a document titled: *OUR's Investigation into Customer Complaints of High Billing by the Jamaica Public Service Company Limited* dated 2020 October 8.

The results of that investigation revealed that 259,679 accounts, which represent 39% of JPS' customer base, were billed in excess of 31 days for the 2020 April billing period.

Apart from stipulations set out in the 2008 Memorandum, the OUR found that, among other things, JPS was non-compliant with the previously issued OUR decision relating to the Exceptions Criteria. This requires JPS to reject any meter reading that falls outside +/- 30% of average previous consumption for residential customers and should not be applied to customer accounts until it is confirmed to be accurate. Additionally, JPS is required to notify affected customers of the significant variance in consumption.

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It was identified during the investigation that for the period 2014 August to 2020 June, customers were not notified whenever there was a significant change in their reading.

The OUR expressed the view that had JPS complied with this OUR decision, the extent of the bill shock experienced by JPS customers in 2020 April, would have been dampened.

JPS has since advised that it has resumed sending notifications to customers with significant variance in consumption, by SMS text messages since 2020 July.

The OUR anticipates full compliance with its directive and report requests.

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