

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OUR Issues Cease and Desist Order to JPS on Widespread Community Outage

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2021 October 15): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) has directed the Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS) to immediately cease and desist the operation of its ‘Transformer Protection Programme’ pilot project, from which wide scale complaints of frequent and prolonged curtailment of electricity services have arisen in the affected communities for prolonged periods.

JPS is also prohibited from taking any similar actions in any other community across the island, as of the effective date of the Directive, issued on 2021 October 15.

The OUR has directed that JPS’s ‘Transformer Protection Programme’ pilot project be suspended for ninety (90) days (in the first place), from 2021 October 15, to allow the OUR to complete its investigations and publish its findings. The OUR is of the view that given the expanse of the pilot, the frequency and duration of the outages complained of, there is a real risk that paying customers will be deprived of adequate and reliable electricity as required by the JPS’s Licence obligations.

Failure by JPS to comply with this Directive within the time period specified herein, will render it liable to enforcement action pursuant to section 9 of the OUR Act.

The OUR’s decision follows complaints received since 2021 July about prolonged power outages in several communities, with reports of many occurring daily. The OUR wrote to the JPS requesting information as part of its investigation into the complaints.

On 2021 October 4, JPS responded apprising the OUR for the first time of the implementation of what it terms its ‘Transformer Protection Programme’ pilot project. The response also gave an indication of the nature and extent of the curtailment of service that has significantly affected JPS’s paying customers in approximately eighty-eight communities. The information suggests that the outages are more widespread in sections of St. Catherine, Kingston and St. Andrew South, Kingston and St. Andrew North, Clarendon and St. James.

The OUR is against all forms of electricity theft which has impacted the provision of economical and adequate electricity services. The OUR is also mindful of JPS’s obligations to take steps to ensure the reliability, adequacy, safety and efficiency of the service that it provides to the public.

The OUR has not approved any policy or measure that would see the use of outages, imposed on legitimate customers, as a means to control electricity losses.

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Therefore, there is the recognition that in the bid to control electricity losses, there is also an imperative to protect the rights and legitimate expectations of paying customers in respect of the utility company's obligation to:

- (i) Minimize service interruptions to the extent practicable and economical;
- (ii) Manage well any interruptions (e.g., notification to customers); and
- (iii) Restore service after an interruption within the shortest practicable time.

The OUR's Directive to JPS can be found on its website: www.our.org.jm

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