

Media Release

OUR Conducts Validation Checks on JPS Post-Beryl Restoration Works

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2024 September 6): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) has been conducting validation checks on Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd.'s (JPS's) restoration of its transmission and distribution infrastructure and reconnection of electricity supply to customers in St. Elizabeth and Manchester. This follows JPS's announced completion of its post-Hurricane Beryl restoration efforts last weekend.

The OUR issued a Directive on 2024 July 31, instructing JPS to repair its damaged network infrastructure and achieve 100 percent restoration to consumers islandwide by 2024 August 12. Restoration challenges emerged in the parishes which were more severely affected, particularly St. Elizabeth, causing JPS to extend its restoration schedule to 2024 August 31, citing its need to re-scope the work due to the extensive damage to its infrastructure.

The OUR team has reported that its observations indicate that all primary and secondary distribution circuits that were impacted are now restored and energized. However, in terms of supply to customers, there are some premises where supply has not been restored due to customers' electrical installations (pothead/conductors, meter pole, meter socket, etc.) not being in place to accommodate service connection.

JPS reported in its last Hurricane Beryl Restoration Schedule of 2024 August 29 that power supply to all but three customers has been restored. Of the three unrestored customers, two (2) accounts relate to water pumps (National Irrigation Commission in St. Elizabeth, and a privately owned pump in Portland) due to access and safety issues, and one customer in St. Thomas. JPS said that it surpassed its promised timeline of 100% restoration across the island by 2024 August 31, by three days.

According to JPS, its focus following the full restoration of its customers is to continue secondary work in St. Elizabeth to redesign, upgrade, and rebuild sections of the distribution network. It also committed to continuing its cleanup process in St. Elizabeth, including removing debris and old wires and conducting a restoration verification exercise.

The OUR's technical team reported that its observations were consistent with earlier reports from JPS about issues on the customers' side of the "connection point" that was preventing full restoration of supply to customers. The team discovered that some circuits, including structures, were restored based on a "rapid repair" approach, and as a result, the problematic issues of leaning pole structures, excessive sagging of conductors, extended pole spans, etc., that existed before and after Hurricane Beryl, continue to exist.

This has implications for the network's structural integrity and resilience, and so the OUR proposes to continue monitoring JPS's plan to revisit and reinforce the installations as part of its "rebuild and resilience" strategy.

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OUR RULES: The management and staff of the OUR are committed to Regulating Utility services in accordance with our Legislative powers and to the Enhancement of customer Satisfaction through continual improvement of our quality management system.

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The OUR's team also took note of issues such as streetlights in some areas which are still to be reconnected and significant number of illegal connections by way of "throw ups" which were apparently not removed during the restoration process. These matters are being brought to JPS's attention for action.

OUR's Director-General, Ansord Hewitt commended the JPS staff for their unstinting efforts in the laborious and sometimes risky restoration tasks they undertook to ensure that electricity was restored to customers. "We extend special commendation to the JPS line staff who worked tirelessly to bring back power to customers, especially those in St. Elizabeth and other areas hardest hit by the outages caused by the hurricane".

In keeping with the OURs' monitoring role, the regulator continues to urge JPS customers in parishes reported as being fully restored to confirm their power supply status. Customers are being asked to email consumerrestoration@our.org.jm or call the local toll-free number: 888 CALL OUR (2255 687) if their electricity service has not been restored.

The OUR reiterates its commitment to lead an in-depth analysis of the electricity system's resilience in the aftermath of the hurricane. This analysis is expected to span the utility's state of preparedness, impact assessments, communications with its customers, and restoration activities and will seek to identify deficiencies, and scope for improvement to enhance disaster recovery procedures.

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