



PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

298 Church Street, Queenstown, Georgetown

*Regulating utilities for efficient services
and protecting consumers' interests.*

PRESS RELEASE

NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS – GPL

Outlines penalties for failure to attend to consumer complaints

Consequent to His Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo assenting to the Electricity Sector Reform (Amendment) Act 2010 No. 17 of 2010 passed in the National Assembly in September 2010 a new Schedule outlining the Customer Service Standard for the Guyana Power & Light Inc (GPL) has been developed by the electricity company in consultation with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

This schedule was approved by the Honourable Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, in his capacity as the minister responsible for the electricity sector, on February 18, 2011 and outlines the time frame within which GPL is expected to respond to consumer complaints and complete identified remedial works. It also spells out penalties to be applied to the company, through credits to consumers accounts, that must be paid by the company if and when found in breach of these timeframes.

The time frames and penalties are as follows: connection of a new service; where primary and or secondary network (poles, transformers and other installations) is required to be installed a maximum 70 days for commercial customers and 84 days for residential customers. In cases where only a service line and meter is to be installed 14 days is the maximum time allowed.

Where the company exceeds the allotted time for a new service where a primary and or secondary network is needed for commercial consumers a fine of \$4000 per day will be instituted, to a maximum of \$40,000 and for residential consumers \$2,000 per day to a maximum of \$20,000. When only the service line and meter is to be installed the penalties for exceeding the 14 days allotted shall be, for commercial customers \$2,000 per day to a maximum of \$20,000 and \$1,000 to a maximum of \$10,000 for residential consumers.

The company will be required, upon payment of the required reconnection fee, to complete reconnection for consumers in Georgetown within 2 days and three days for those outside of Georgetown provided that the meter and service lines had not been removed. In instances where the meter and service line were removed upon disconnection a maximum of 7 days is allowed. Penalties for exceeding the time will be for commercial entities \$2,000 for the first day and \$3,000 per day thereafter to a maximum of \$8,000 and residential services \$1,000 for the first day and \$2,000 per day for each succeeding day to a maximum of \$5,000.

The time allowed for the GPL to respond to repair calls for commercial entities will be one day maximum with a penalty one-off fine of \$15,000 and one and a half day for residential consumers with a one-off fine of \$3,000. The report will be considered made at the time it was registered with the company's customer service representative

and a reference number provided. A careful note should be taken to ensure that the correct address and an accurate direction/description of the location of the fault are provided by the complainant when giving the report. GPL is required to act in good faith when responding to repair calls to ensure faults are corrected expeditiously.

Customers who have queries in relation to their bills, service quality and other queries about their account and lodge complaints with the company via telephone, correspondence or over the counter which does not involve investigations outside the office, is expected to receive an acknowledgement to their query within five days of its submission and a response within 10 days thereafter. Where investigations are required at the consumer's premises a maximum of 50 days is allowed. A penalty of \$500 per day to a maximum of \$3000 will be imposed on the company for breaches. At least 90% of all such inquires shall be responded to within 21 days of notice and 100% responded to within forty days of notice.

Consumers who have reason to suspect that the meter at their premises is improperly registering, causing them to be billed for **more or less** than they consume must **notify the company in writing** stating their concerns. GPL is required to respond to them in writing within 7 days and complete testing the meter for its accuracy within 30 days thereafter. If the meter was found to be defective after the test it must be replaced within 60 days of the test – provided that the customer has rewired the meter interface where necessary, to the current standard and has obtained an inspection certificate.

The company shall be penalised for failure to respond in writing within 7 days of a notification from a consumer that a meter may be defective is \$500 per day to a maximum of \$3,000. If the test is not completed 30 days thereafter a fine of \$1,000 per day for a maximum of \$5,000 while a fine of \$1,000 for commercial customers to a maximum of \$5,000 and \$500 per day to a maximum of \$2,500 shall be applied if the defective meter is not replaced within the 60 days limit.

Consumers are advised that all fines as a result of breaches in the customer standards outlined above will be payable to them via a credit to their account with the power company. They are advised that when ever a complaint/query is being lodged with a company employee the name and designation of that employee should be noted for future reference. Further it would be preferable that queries and faults should be reported in writing to an officer of the company who should sign and date the receipt of the document. Where queries /reports are made over the telephone a reference number should be requested.

The institution of these new service standards, which became effective immediately, will be closely monitored by the PUC. Consumers who have found the company in breach of these standards are asked to contact the PUC on telephone number 226 7042 or visit our office at 298 Church Street Queenstown, Georgetown or the website at www.puc.org.gy.

We remain committed to regulating utilities for efficient services and protecting consumers' interest.

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Telephone (592) 226 7042

fax (592) 227 3534

www.puc.org.gy