

Utility Companies pay out Millions to Customers for Service Breaches

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2017 June 7): Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS) and the National Water Commission (NWC) paid out millions to customers during the January to March 2017 quarter as a result of service breaches.

The data are contained in the Office of Utilities Regulation's (OUR's) Quarterly Performance Report for the January- March 2017 quarter.

The JPS compliance report on its performance on the Guaranteed Standards indicate that 26,762 breaches were committed over the period. These breaches attracted a pay out of approximately \$52.5 million, all of which was paid out by way of automatic compensation. The number of breaches committed during the period declined by 29% over the October – December 2016 quarter.

NWC's compliance report on the Guaranteed Standards scheme for the review period indicate that 581 breaches were committed with a potential pay out of approximately \$1.85 million. The actual payments amounted to \$763,839.04, representing 41% of total potential payments. The payments were by way of automatic credits to the affected accounts. The number of breaches during the period was 49% less than those committed over the preceding period.

In addition, the OUR secured \$652,478.87 for utility customers during the period, as a result of its investigation into their appeals. The NWC, at 88%, accounted for the greatest share of the credits secured, with JPS and Columbus Communications (FLOW) accounting for 10% and 2% of the remaining credits, respectively.

Overall, there was a fifteen percent (15%) reduction in the number of contacts made to the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) of the OUR between January and March 2017.

The CAU reported that 865 new contacts were received during the period. Of this number, 32% related to JPS, 30% pertained to matters relating to the NWC, while a combined 27% related to service with Cable and Wireless Jamaica Limited and Columbus Communications (FLOW). Digicel accounted for 7% of the contacts, while the remaining 4% were for small water providers Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd. (DEML) and the National Irrigation Commission, small telecommunications providers Caricel and Dekal Wireless, and OUR/Other (Not Utility Provider Related).

Billing matters at 48%, remained the main reason for persons contacting the CAU. However this is a 17% decline over the preceding period. The NWC (at 21%) accounted for the highest number of billing related matters with the JPS following at 16%.

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Service interruption issues, at 13%, continued to account for the second highest reason for customer contacts. When compared to the preceding period, these issues represent a 31% decrease.

The OUR's latest Quarterly Performance Report can be found on its website: www.our.org.jm

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