



RIC NEWS

Welcome to the **Regulated Industries Commission's (RIC)** inaugural newsletter - **RIC News**. This newsletter will be published quarterly and will inform readers of new developments within the regulatory environment and utilities sector in Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere.

We welcome your feedback, which can be sent to ricoffice@ric.org.tt

The **RIC** was established under the Regulated Industries Commission Act No. 26 of 1998. The RIC, which succeeded the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), is a consumer-oriented entity with independent regulatory powers and responsibilities.

The Act has empowered the **RIC** to set and enforce quality standards for the following:

- Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA);
- Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC);
- The Power Generation Company of Trinidad and Tobago (POWERGEN);
- Trinity Power Management (formerly InnCOGEN Ltd.)

and

- Trinidad and Tobago Telecommunications Service (TSTT);

The Act mandates the Commission to achieve the dual objectives of ensuring:

- Value for money spent by consumers;
- Enough revenue to keep the utilities efficient, self-sufficient, and capable of making the necessary investments to improve their operations.

Regulatory powers and responsibilities of the RIC include:

- Setting standards and measures of performance, and keeping them under regular review;

- Approving the basis on which utilities charge their rates, and keeping watch on deviations;
- Investigating consumer complaints and settling disagreements where possible when consumers cannot get redress from service providers;
- Consulting and acting in a transparent and accountable manner and publishing information that allows all stakeholders to be informed and participate in regulatory decision-making.

Commissions appointed under the Regulated Industries Commission Act 1998 are appointed by the President for not more than five years. ■



Gordon Wyke, Standards Engineer of the Regulated Industries Commission, addresses participants at RIC's Public Consultation on the Quality of Service Standards for the Water and Wastewater Sectors. The consultations began in Tobago and were also held in communities across Trinidad. • See story on Page 4

Our Mission

- To ensure service providers provide reliable and efficient services at fair and reasonable rates
- To build a credible and transparent regulatory regime that responds adequately to stakeholders' concerns
- To demonstrate fairness, equity and concern for the national welfare in the performance of its functions

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RIC In Action

Complaint: A resident of George Village, Tableland, wrote to WASA regarding the classification of his account. Having received no response from the water authority, the complainant contacted the RIC to investigate the matter on his behalf. He noted that WASA had billed him under its A3 classification (internally serviced) when in fact he did not receive that type of service.

Solution: The RIC contacted WASA who investigated the matter. The investigation revealed that the property did not display any visible signs of a water service connection. The account was reclassified to an A1 (stand pipe) and the consumer's account was adjusted.

SERVICE STANDARDS
SET FOR ELECTRICITY SECTOR

Section 6 of the RIC Act (No. 26 of 1998) empowers the RIC to prescribe standards for services and to impose sanctions for non-compliance.

The Quality of Service Standards for Transmission and Distribution in the Electricity Sector establishes mechanisms to monitor service quality and encourage the service provider to maintain high standards in the provision of that service.

The Standards cover a wide range of services relating to the supply, distribution and metering of services.

There are two types of standards.

Guaranteed Standards - The Guaranteed Standards set service levels that must be met in each individual case.

These standards also carry compensatory payments to the affected consumers if the service provider fails to meet the level of service required.

Consumers must complete and submit a Claim Form, which is available at any T&TEC Service Centre. The claim must be submitted within three months of the breach of the Standard.

Overall Standards - These cover areas of service where it is not appropriate or feasible to give individual guarantees, but where the expectation is that the utility will provide pre-determined minimum levels of service.

These Standards generally relate to the reliability of service affecting a group of customers. They are intended to ensure a minimum level of service for customers as well as to encourage the service provider to achieve higher levels of performance. ■

ELECTRICITY STANDARDS LAUNCHED

The Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) launched the Quality of Service Standards (QSS) for the Electricity Sector in Trinidad and Tobago on January 22, 2004 at the Trinidad Hilton.

Chairman of the RIC Dennis Pantin said the establishment of Quality of Service Standards seeks to steer a regulated industry into mimicking the behaviour it would have exhibited had there been competitors.

The Chairman said the establishment of QSS allows for the creation of 340,000 decentralised regulators (T&TEC Customer Base) who will serve as the eyes and ears of

the RIC. These customers will monitor the performance of the service provider.

The Chairman noted that the Standards were developed over a two-year consultative process that included stakeholders and representatives of the utility sector.

Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, the Honourable Penelope Beckles applauded the efforts of the RIC and reminded utility providers present that Trinidad and Tobago was on the threshold of a new era in which customer expectations are met and even surpassed in the delivery of public utilities. See **Standards** on page 3 ■

FAQs

Q If I receive poor service from a service provider what should I do?

A All service providers have procedures for dealing with customer complaints. If you have a complaint about a service provider you should first speak or write to the utility about the matter. If, after following the company's complaints procedure you are still not satisfied or if the utility does not respond to your complaint you may ask the RIC to investigate the matter.

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QUALITY OF SERVICE STANDARDS FOR THE ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION SECTOR

GUARANTEED STANDARDS

Service Standard Description	Performance Measure	Required Performance	Payment per Customer
Response and restoration time after unplanned outages on the distribution system.	Time for restoration of supply to affected customers	Within 12 hours	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential) \$20 (for each further 12-hr period)
Billing Punctuality (new customers)	Time for first bill to be mailed after service connection: (a) Residential / Commercial	65 days	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)
Reconnection after payment of overdue amounts or agreed payment schedule	Time to restore supply after payment (All customers)	Within 24 hours	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)
Making and keeping appointments	Where required, appointments will be made on a morning or afternoon basis	Failure to give 24 hours notice of inability to keep the appointment	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)
Connection to supply: Under 30 metres	Service drop and meter to be installed:	Within 3 working days	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)
30 to 100 metres	(a) Provision of estimate (subject to all documents being provided)	Within 5 working days	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)
30 to 100 metres	(b) Complete construction (after payment is made)	Within 15 working days	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)
100 to 250 metres	(a) Provision of estimate (subject to all documents being provided)	Within 7 working days	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)
100 to 250 metres	(b) Complete construction (after payment is made)	Within 20 working days	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)
Compensatory payment	(i) Time to complete investigation, determine liability and make payment after receiving a claim.* (ii) Time to credit compensatory payment after non-compliance.*	Within 35 working days Within 35 working days	\$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential) \$30 (residential) \$200 (non-residential)

NB: *The above Standards will not be in effect during a period of force majeure*

OVERALL STANDARDS

Description	Required Performance Units	Description	Required Performance Units
Line faults repaired within a specified period	100% within 48 hours	Response to customer queries/ requests (written)	
Billing punctuality	98% of all bills to be mailed within ten (10) working days after meter reading or estimation	(a) Time to respond after receipt of queries.	Within 5 working days
Frequency of meter testing	10% of industrial customers meters tested for accuracy annually.	(b) Time to complete investigation and to communicate final position	Within 15 working days of inquiry
Frequency of meter reading	(a) 90% of industrial meters should be read every month (b) 90% of residential and commercial meters read according to schedule	(c) Time to complete investigation and communicate final position if third party is involved	Within 30 working days after third party actions completed
System revenue losses (difference between energy received and energy for which revenue is derived)	7.5 % losses of total energy delivered to customers	Complaints to T&TEC by type:	
Prior Notice of planned outages	At least 72 hours (3 days) advance notice of planned outages 100% of the time	(a) Billing queries	(a) 500 telephone and /or written complaints per 10,000 customers per annum
		(b) Voltage - Fluctuations/ Damage	(b) 300 telephone and /or written complaints per 10,000 customers per annum
		(c) Street Lights/ Poles/ Disconnections/ Other	(c) 1000 telephone and /or written complaints per 10,000 customers per annum
		Correction of Low/ High Voltage complaints	All responded to within 24 hours and rectified within 15 working days

* *There has been a re-ordering of the Guaranteed Standards relative to how they appear in the legal order.*

ON THE HORIZON



SERVICE STANDARDS FOR THE WATER AND WASTEWATER SECTORS

The RIC has published for public comment the Draft Quality of Service Standards for the Water Sector.

The standards form part of a new regime for regulating WASA and other "service providers" listed in the Regulated Industries Act 1998.

They are presented under the headings of Guaranteed Standards and Overall Standards. These will form the basis for measuring WASA's performance in the area of quality of service.

Guaranteed Standards set service levels that must be met on an individual case. These standards also carry compensatory payments to customers if the utility fails to provide the level of service required.

Overall Standards cover areas of service where it is inappropriate

or not feasible to provide individual guarantees, but where the expectation is that the utility will provide pre-determined, minimum levels of service. The standards cover a wide range of services and will benefit both consumers and service providers.

The document proposes a Compensatory Payment scheme for failure to meet the Guaranteed Standards. Failure to meet the Overall Standards will not result in compensatory payment, but require regulatory response.

In March 2004, RIC began its consultation programme in Tobago on the Water and Wastewater sector.

In developing the proposed standards, the RIC took into consideration WASA's structure, operation, past history, specialist information recommended to the

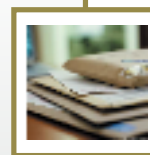
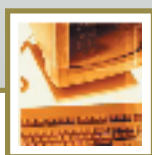
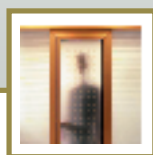
Authority by consultants and data on its current service quality performance. Information was also drawn from the United Kingdom Office of Water Services, and the Office of Utilities Regulation in Jamaica.

The RIC is seeking the views of all stakeholders on whether the concept of guaranteed and overall standards is an adequate and appropriate mechanism for monitoring quality of customer service in the water and wastewater sector. ■



THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 1 Follow the complaints procedures of the service provider.
- 2 If you are not satisfied with the decision or how the complaint was handled, you may then contact the RIC.
- 3 Submit your complaint via any one of the following:
 - Post
 - Telephone
 - Fax
 - E-mail
 - Visiting the RIC
- 4 Supply all relevant information and or documents that would assist the RIC in understanding and investing your complaint.
- 5 RIC will contact the service provider and keep you informed of the status of your complaint.
- 6 RIC will respond within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.



UPCOMING

Activities

The RIC will publish its draft Social Action Plan for public comment. The Plan covers areas such as:

- Priority services for vulnerable groups including specific consideration for visual, speech and hearing challenged;
- The development of rating and pricing structures that address issues of lower income and disadvantaged groups;
- Continuation and extension of the Hardship Relief Programme (in the case of water);
- The finalization of various Codes of Practice for the Service Providers relating to:
 - Procedures for dealing with customers in default;
 - Debt recovery and disconnection procedures and policies;
 - Retroactive billing policies; and
- The handling of complaints.

The RIC will continue to consult with stakeholders and implement a Public Education Programme.

RIC takes decisions regarding TSTT Rate of Return and unlicensed operations at International Call Centres.