

COMPLAINTS CORNER

How do I sort out problems with the Service Provider?

You must first contact your Service Provider and explain that you wish to make a complaint. You can do this in a number of ways:

- IN WRITING
- IN PERSON
- BY TELEPHONE
- BY EMAIL

If you are complaining by phone:

- Make a note of what you want to say before you call
- Be clear about how you want the problem to be sorted out
- Have any relevant documents on hand – such as bills or letters from your service provider
- Have a notebook ready and write down the name of the person you speak to, the date and time of day and what was said
- If you complain by phone, you should try to follow up your call with a letter, especially if your complaint is serious

FOR ALL CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS: CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPARTMENT@800-4RIC(4742)

NAME	POSITION	EXTENSION
Mohan Chadee	Customer Services Manager	251
Daramdeo Maharaj	Customer Services Rep.	253
Karleen Mangru	Customer Services Rep.	254
Diahann Abraham	Customer Services Rep.	255

Do you know that if your electricity supply is not restored within 12 hours after an unplanned outage that you are entitled to a rebate on your bill?

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

It's up to you to monitor services and ensure that T&TEC is in full compliance with the Quality of Service Standards and that they are held accountable for any breaches of these standards. Remember you may be entitled to compensatory payments if the service provider fails to provide the level of service specified in the standards.

Get Involved, Take Charge.

CALL:
800-4RIC

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Contact T&TEC's Trouble Report Section at your District Office or visit the nearest Customer Service Centre.

Protecting *YOUR* Interests

www.ric.org.tt

A phone call away

There when you need us - The RIC is in full support of all free speech initiatives since we function in a transparent manner and encourage all stakeholders to participate in the regulatory decision-making process through public consultations. As such, we are available for discussion/consultation on issues that require clarification, as it pertains to matters affecting the regulatory function of any of the service providers under our purview. The RIC personnel who can be contacted are as follows:

NAME	POSITION	EXTENSION	ISSUE	800-4RIC
Harjinder S. Atwal	Executive Director	321	All Issues	
Garvin Alexander	Assistant Executive Director, Technical Operations	351	T&TEC Rate Review	
Claude Byer	Tariff Analyst	344	T&TEC Rate Review	
Carol Balkaran	Tariff Analyst	345	T&TEC Rate Review	
Gordon Wyke	Standards Engineer	354	WASA	

Quirks

"Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities have crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense."
- Ralph Emerson

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REGULATED INDUSTRIES COMMISSION

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RIC NEWS WELCOMES YOUR VIEWS & COMMENTS.

Contact: Ms. Denise Caesar - Corporate Communications Coordinator

E-Mail: caesard@ric.org.tt



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Protecting *YOUR* Interests

Assuring QUALITY OF SERVICE

The Quality of Service Standards (QSS) for the Electrical Transmission and Distribution Sector, which were launched in April 2004, are a major initiative of the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC). The QSS seek to ensure that consumer expectations of consistency, reliability, and accountability from the service providers are met and/or exceeded.

The QSS establish standards by which the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) is evaluated. A performance report is prepared annually and is based on two dimensions: **Guaranteed Standards (GES)** and **Overall Standards (OES)**. A summary of T&TEC's performance during the period *April 2004 - December 2005* is being assessed in this report.

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- PG3. • Water Sector focus at OOCUR Conference in Grenada
 - RIC chairman appointed Chairman of OOCUR
- PG4. • Save Money on your next Electricity Bill
 - WATT U Need to Know

Assuring **QUALITY OF SERVICE**

GUARANTEED STANDARDS (GES)

With respect to the Guaranteed Standards, T&TEC has under performed in GES1, which requires T&TEC to respond and restore supply after an unplanned outage within 12 hours. There was full compliance with two standards (GES 4- Making and Keeping Appointments and GES 5 - Time to Credit Compensatory Payments), with no breaches for the period under review. In the case of the GES 5 - Time to Credit Compensatory Payments, T&TEC was able to achieve compliance largely due to the fact that customers had not been claiming when breaches occur – 25,145 breaches occurred under the GES in 2005. *Based on the number of breaches, the RIC estimates that compensatory payments of approximately \$755,000.00 would have been due to customers, had claims been made and payments been verified and approved.*

OVERALL STANDARDS (OES)

In terms of the OES, there is room for improvement in a number of areas. T&TEC must enhance its billing punctuality, by ensuring that bills are mailed within 10 working days after a meter has been read or estimated (OES 4), give 3 days advance notice of planned outages (OES 8), and respond to all voltage complaints (OES 9) within 24 hours and rectify these within 15 working days, as part of its commitment to the OES. It has been determined that new and more stringent requirements for OES 5 – System losses and OES 9 – Correction of High/Low Voltage are needed, and these have been identified in the Final Determination and are linked to an incentive scheme to ensure that they are consistently maintained.

In protecting the interests of customers, the RIC will ensure that the service provider makes a concerted effort to increase customer awareness of the compensatory process - All customers of T&TEC are entitled to guaranteed standards of service and the RIC will continue to collaborate/hold discussions with T&TEC on those standards that pose a challenge.

Remember, it's your responsibility to monitor services and ensure that T&TEC complies with the Quality of Service Standards and that T&TEC is held accountable for any breaches of these standards. **GET INVOLVED, TAKE CHARGE!** The RIC cannot do it alone. Consumers must play an *active part* and assume the role of *Individual Regulators*. *With the RIC serving as your Voice, together we can make improvements in the Quality of Service delivered to you the customer.*

RESIDENTIAL ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS NOT BEING SUBSIDIZED BY INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS

In the face of rising concern that industrial and commercial customers are being made to subsidize the residential customers, the RIC wants to dispel this mistaken belief in the wake of Government's announcement that the new electricity rates would be implemented for Industrial and Commercial Customers with effect from November 01, 2006. Public Utilities and the environment Minister Penelope Beckles stated "Government will advise on the implementation of the new tariff structure recommended by the RIC for residential customers at a future date." **Although in principle the logic for cross-subsidization appears sound, in its Final Determination, the RIC acknowledged the inappropriateness of such unwarranted and excessive cross subsidies.**

In preparing its Final Determination on the Regulation of Electricity Transmission and Distribution, the RIC considered the impact of its pricing decisions on customers, the rate of inflation and the country's competitiveness. It should be noted that the impact on industrial and commercial customers would vary depending on their level of usage as they are much more diverse in terms of their usage patterns. However, a thorough investigation was conducted and revealed that any likely

inflationary impact would be minimal. Furthermore, the contribution of increased costs of electricity would also have a minimal impact on the total operating expenses of different industries in the country, given the small share of electricity costs in the total operating costs of most industries and commercial institutions. In acknowledging the minimal impact, the Supermarkets Association of Trinidad and Tobago indicated, "the implementation of the new electricity rates will affect **1% of Operating Costs** of supermarkets."

The RIC also launched a major initiative for improving the quality of service in the country. The Quality of Service Standards (QSS) forms part of a new system for regulating public utilities with the intention of ensuring that consumer expectations of consistency, reliability and accountability from T&TEC are met or exceeded. It's your responsibilities as customers to monitor services and ensure that T&TEC complies with the Quality of Service Standards and that T&TEC is held accountable for any breaches of these standards. The RIC will continue to take a public stand and assume an active role in shaping the future of the electricity transmission and distribution sector.

Let's **RIConcile**: - CASE STUDY

The word '**Reconcile**' – by definition refers to settling or resolving a dispute and this is exactly what this feature of the newsletter is intended to do. The "**RICONCILE**" case study presents an actual scenario and discloses the steps taken by the RIC to resolve the issue. The names of all parties involved have been omitted to respect confidentiality. This is the first of an ongoing series that will highlight the RIC's role as a responsible regulator in protecting consumer interests.

CASE: A customer of T&TEC from the Eastern Area visited the RIC regarding his dissatisfaction with the Service Provider's response to a billing query. He indicated that his account was being billed under a meter multiplier of 2 from the date he received an electricity connection in 1996. The customer's neighbours were being billed at a multiplier of 1 even though their supply was from the same transformer bank. Checks conducted by the customer revealed that his bills were double that of his neighbours with similar appliances. The customer requested a rebate of the charges for the entire 4 year period from T&TEC. However, T&TEC subsequently advised the customer that the credit would be limited to a period of one year based on their Retroactive Billing Policy.

SOLUTION: The RIC examined T&TEC's policy regarding retroactive billing and identified that the limit of one year is based on the assumption that the adjustment emanated from some action or omission on the customer's part. In this case T&TEC was culpable by not billing the customer accurately and as such the policy did not apply.

RESULTS: The case was referred to the RIC's legal officer and it was determined that T&TEC was obligated by law to compensate the customer for a period of four (4) years based on the "Limitation of Certain Actions Act 2000". T&TEC was advised of the RIC's position. T&TEC complied with the advice to extend the period of retroactivity to the statutory period of four (4) years. Interest was also paid to the customer for the period.

LESSONS LEARNED: The lessons learned from this case are clear:

- Always do your homework - Don't take information provided as final.
- Seek advice from a learned professional in the relevant field if you are uncertain about an issue.

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NEW **RIC**-ruits - **Appointments**

The RIC welcomes two new RICruits to the Commission, both of whom are eager to adopt the superior work ethic and dedication that the RIC values.

KAREN ECCLES - **Dynamic**

Graduated from the University of Toronto, Faculty of Information Studies in early 2004 with a Masters of Information Studies degree (MIS), specializing in Library Information studies. On her return to Trinidad she was appointed Librarian at the Arima Public Library, which she managed for a year and in early 2005 was appointed Librarian II at the Ministry of Finance, Inland Revenue Division. Currently she holds the position of Librarian at the Regulated Industries Commission.



Karen Eccles

GERARD BENJAMIN - **Versatile**

Attended the School of Accounting and Management where he attained a BSc. in Computing and Information Systems from the University of London (External Programme). Gerard was previously employed with CableNett, Fujitsu-ICL, Qwest Caribbean Limited, Alpha Caribbean and Unilever. He is the IT Specialist at the Regulated Industries Commission.



Gerard Benjamin

Ask a **LAWYER**

This column provides an opportunity for you to get all your legal questions answered by a qualified attorney-at-law attached to the RIC. If you have a question, it can be directed to us at ricoffice@ric.org.tt and the answer would be featured in the next issues.



Turkessa Blades

QUESTION: Why are Consultations important to you?

ANSWER: Consultation is a process of communication between entities on an issue, prior to making a decision or determining a direction on the issue. Once a decision is being made that affects an individual's rights or position in society, the individual should be given the opportunity to express his views on that issue and consultations facilitate this.



*Spare yourself many hard falls;
don't jump to conclusions.*

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL WITH

— DARAMDEO MAHARAJ



DARAMDEO MAHARAJ
Customer Service Representative

1. Three words or phrases that best describe my personality:

Honest – Honesty is the key to one's integrity. I believe that one must be honourable in principles, intentions and actions in order to gain respect and achieve credibility.

Industrious – I believe that hard work and perseverance bring great success. In order to achieve your goals in life and overcome challenges one must be diligent and industrious.

Fair and Impartial – I believe in giving everyone an opportunity to prove themselves. One must not make decisions based on "hearsay" or hearing from one side of the story. The decisions you make must be free from bias and dishonesty.

2. My current job and what I love about it:

Customer Service Representative (CSR)

Firstly, it gives me great satisfaction to know that I have assisted customers/consumers who are dissatisfied with the level of service from Service Providers (WASA & T&TEC).

Secondly, playing a part in the development of policies and procedures to ensure that the Service Providers give efficient and reliable service to customer/consumers.

Thirdly, the skills acquired and experience gained through interaction with customers and personnel of the service providers, have helped me to effectively resolve conflicts and understand different modes of human behaviour.

3. My personal credo and how it strengthens my role and responsibility here at the RIC:

"When work is a pleasure life is a joy".

I believe that in order for an individual to have true job satisfaction he must enjoy what he is doing. Work must not become burdensome or boring so I take a positive approach to my duties and responsibilities at the RIC, which is also transmitted in my relationships and interactions outside of the office environment.

4. An out-of-the-ordinary skill you might not guess about me:

I am **"Mr. Fix It"** at home. Anything electrical, mechanical, plumbing and woodwork that warrant repairs I try to fix. The challenge to trouble shoot and repair stuff is exhilarating.

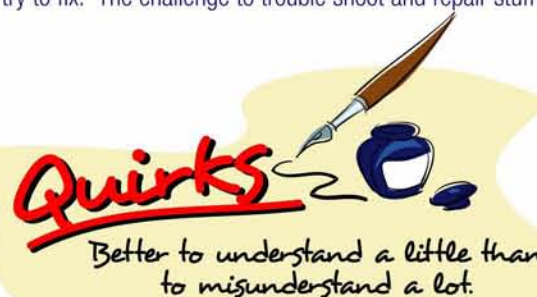
5. The one person I most admire and why:

Mohandas K. Gandhi

I hold Mahatma Gandhi in the highest esteem. He was a simple and modest man who remained committed to his principles and faith even in the most extreme situations. Gandhi's philosophy on Truth, Peace, Fearlessness, Love, and Non-violence is an example to all and his teachings have inspired popular civil rights leaders.

6. My friends would say:

That I am humble, conscientious and always willing to help. My friends would also say that I am a meticulous individual and non-judgemental in nature.



FAST FACTS

The **Social Action Plan** is a plan developed by the RIC to provide the foundation for comprehensive and on-going initiatives to protect consumers, concentrating on specific programmes intended for low income and vulnerable groups. It focuses on what priority action will be concentrated by the RIC and also sets out the contributions expected from the Service Providers, while seeking to ensure that the social issues are fully considered in both the *water and electricity sectors*.

TAP in to this...

At times, we are all guilty of wasting water. By making a few small changes to your habits, you can help save water.

WATER SAVING TIPS:

- Use a bowl for washing vegetables and dishes;
- Don't leave the tap running whilst brushing your teeth; and
- Fix leaking taps - A running tap could use up to nine litres of water a day.



RIC focuses on WATER SECTOR at OOCUR Conference in Grenada

This year marked the fourth annual conference of the **Organization of Caribbean Utility Regulators (OOCUR)** and showcased the work of regulators from around the region. The 3-day conference addressed **"The Challenges of Public Utilities in a Regulatory Environment"** and was staged from **8-10 November 2006** at the Grenadian Rex Resorts of Grenada. OOCUR is a non-profit organization that was established to facilitate the conducting of research, training & development, and the comprehension of regulatory issues. The OOCUR conferences ultimately provide an opportunity for regional regulators to network, while sharing information and experience.

The Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) focused on matters pertaining to the Water and Wastewater sector with the Chairman, Professor Dennis Pantin leading off a presentation on, **"Contribution of Water Tariffs to water markets for Watershed Protection in the Caribbean."** Initiating discussion on the feasibility of Universal Metering, Gordon Wyke, Standards Engineer, developed the theme **"Pursuing Water Conservation in T&T: The Development of Universal Metering as a Strategic Option"** while Claude Byer examined **"Management Incentives and the Water Sector in T&T."** Taking a theoretical principle and making the appropriate application, Carol Balkaran expanded on **"The Applicability of the 'Glas Cymru Model' to the Reform of the Water Sector in T&T, From 'Government' to 'Governance.'"** The presentations all detailed initiatives that could possibly transform the Water And Sewage Authority (WASA), making it an efficient and viable entity.



In its Final Determination on T&TEC's rate application, the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) had proposed the establishment of Working Groups comprising key stakeholders to develop Damaged Appliance Policy, Capital Contribution and Service Deposit policies, within the first 6 months of the finalization of the Determination. At a press conference held on Wednesday 20th September 2006 at its office in Port-Of-Spain, the RIC presented the newly appointed committee members with their Terms of Reference.

The Committee members of each Working Group comprise representatives from key stakeholder groups such as

RIC CHAIRMAN APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF OOCUR

Professor Dennis Pantin

The Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) is pleased to publicly acknowledge the promotion of our **Chairman Professor Dennis Pantin**, Head of the Economics Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of the West Indies, to the post of **Chairman of the Organization of Caribbean Utility Regulators (OOCUR)**. OOCUR facilitates the conducting of research, training & development, and provides an opportunity for regional regulators to network, while sharing information and experience. The OOCUR Executive Council announced the appointment at a recent 3-day conference themed **"The Challenges of Public Utilities in a Regulatory Environment"** held from 8-10 November 2006 in Grenada. As Chairman of OOCUR, Professor Pantin will spearhead the improvement of utility regulation among member countries with the objective of fostering transparent and stable utility regulation through autonomous and independent regulators.



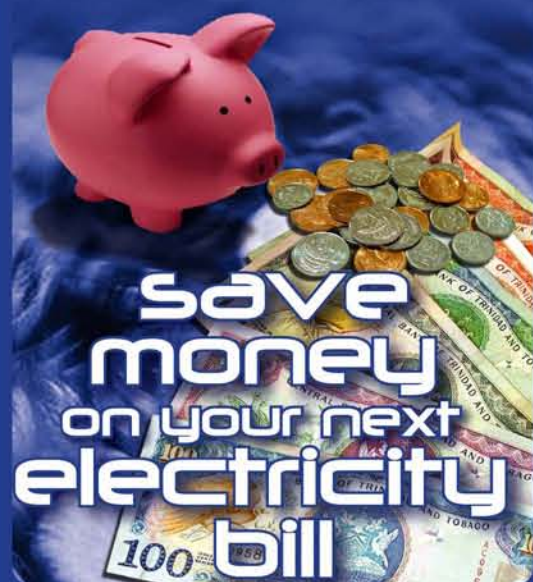
On Friday 22nd September 2006, the **Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment** hosted a Staff Recognition and Appreciation function to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of staff at the Ministry as well as personnel at other institutions that fall under the purview of the Ministry. The RIC's own Gordon Wyke was the proud recipient of an award in the category of **National Contribution**. We warmly congratulate Gordon on his award!

Working Groups

RIC presents Terms of Reference to T&TEC Rate Review Working Groups

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association (TTMA), Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS), the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) and the RIC. The primary function of these Working Groups is to assist the RIC in developing the detailed proposals for the RIC's consideration.

This initiative exemplifies the RIC's commitment to fulfilling its mandate to protect consumer interests while simultaneously ensuring that service providers have adequate resources, to provide the highest quality of service to all customers.



FOR RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS, CONSERVING ELECTRICITY HAS BECOME ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT. TO CONSERVE ENERGY, A CUSTOMER CAN SEEK OUT WAYS TO USE ELECTRICITY MORE EFFICIENTLY. Here Are Some Ways To Reduce Your Electricity Consumption And Lower Your Bill Without Spending A Lot Of Money.

- ◆ **UNPLUG** - Unplug your chargers when you're not charging. Most houses is full of little plastic power supplies to charge cell phones, PDA's, digital cameras, cordless tools and other personal gadgets. Keep them unplugged until you need them.
- ◆ **REFRIGERATOR** - Do not open your refrigerator door needlessly. By getting into the habit of removing and replacing several articles at once, you will reduce the loss of cold air.
- ◆ **ELECTRIC STOVES** - Use a pressure cooker to conserve energy when cooking foods that take a long time, such as stews.
- ◆ **MICROWAVE OVENS** - Use your microwave oven to cook small to medium quantities of food. To cook larger portions of meat, it is better to use a conventional oven.
- ◆ **LIGHTING** - Turn off lights when not in use or when leaving a room. Use "task lighting" rather than lighting the whole room unnecessarily for close work.

Are you dissatisfied with the quality of T&TEC's service?

YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

If you have a complaint about your electricity service, it is in your interest to file a written complaint with T&TEC. It's up to you to monitor services and ensure that T&TEC complies with the **Quality of Service Standards** and that T&TEC is held accountable for any breaches of these standards. **Get Involved, Take Charge.**

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WATT U NEED TO KNOW

'Knowledge is Power,' – The following chart shows the average wattage and the approximate number of kilowatt-hours (kWh) used in two months by some common appliances. It can serve as a useful guide and assist you the consumer in adjusting your consumption and usage accordingly.

APPLIANCE	Average Wattage	Estimated Hours Used	Est. kWh Consumed	Bi-Monthly Cost
Clothes Dryer	6600	33.0	218	58.86
DVD Player	12	32.0	0.38	0.103
Video Cassette Recorder	40	180.0	7	1.89
Vacuum Cleaner	1560	13.0	20	5.40
Blow Dryer	1875	7.0	13	3.51
Kettle	1500	20.0	30	8.10
Power Drill	500	7.0	4	1.08



T&TEC
Consumption and Usage
Information courtesy T&TEC.

NOTE:
1. The bi-monthly cost excludes VAT and customer charge.

2. The bi-monthly cost is calculated based on the new prices at the lowest tier of 27cents per kWh (Kilowatt-hour).

FESTIVE TIMES!

The close of 2006 was a festive time for the RIC - with our first ever Children's Christmas Party, the inaugural performance of our parang band Los Ricos de Paranderos at our Christmas Luncheon and the Chairman's End of Year Celebration time, the RIC certainly had a lot to celebrate. It was a time to mark the achievements of the past year as well as to welcome new challenges for 2007. These photos depict the good times had by all. We hope you enjoy them. Until next year...

