

CARNIVAL TIME START DE FROLICKIN!!! 2008

It's Official!! This year's Carnival lime on Monday 21st January '08 was the best one yet thanks in part to staff involvement/enjoyment, Allison, Destra, Adesh, the Rhythm Section & the music of course.



Photography by: **Kenrick Nicholas**

REGULATED INDUSTRIES COMMISSION

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RIC NEWS WELCOMES YOUR VIEWS & COMMENTS.
 Contact: Ms. Denise Caesar - Corporate Communications Coordinator
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COMPLAINTS CORNER



When Making A COMPLAINT:

- Make copies of any document you send to your service provider.
- DO NOT send originals; Take meter readings, particularly if your complaint concerns your billing or supply, make a note of the date the readings were taken;
- Make notes of who you have spoken, or written to, and when, so that you can refer to them; and
- Keep copies of correspondence sent to you by your Service Provider so that you can refer to them.

CAN YOU SPOT

the
electrical
and other
hazards in
this room?



ANSWERS:

- Razor on the floor.
- Electrical cord under the rug.
- Water on the floor.
- Unsupervised baby.
- It's important to conserve water.
- Running tap though not a hazard.

HOME
SAFETY INITIATIVE



REGULATED INDUSTRIES COMMISSION

RIC NEWS

ISSUE: 1

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Protecting *YOUR* Interests

VOLUME: 5

APPLICATION OF PUC ORDER 83 TO DOMESTIC CUSTOMERS & VAT REGISTERED BUSINESSES

The Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) wishes to inform the public that in response to numerous complaints to the letters sent by the Water And Sewage Authority (WASA) informing customers that WASA "has been mandated by the RIC in accordance with Order 83 to levy non-domestic rates on all premises where Value Added Tax (VAT) registered business operates that:

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- PG2. • RIC requests Annual Dry Season Plan from WASA
- PG3. • Application of PUC-Order 83 to Domestic Customers & VAT Registered Businesses
- PG4. • Annual Complaints Report

Arial View of Port-of-Spain

RIC REQUESTS

Annual Dry Season Plan from



The national population is still experiencing the effects of what has been dubbed the **"worst dry season in recent years"** with rural communities being most affected and their plight being highlighted in the press almost on a daily basis. As the statutory body that regulates the water sector, the **Regulated Industries Commission (RIC)** is working to address social fairness and ensure that lower income and vulnerable groups are provided with water. To effect change in the sector, WASA has to make improvements, which will impact on those who are currently deprived of a reasonable quality of service. To this end, the RIC has directed the service provider to prepare and submit annually, a **Water Preparedness Plan for the Dry Season** by December 31 of every year.

The local water and wastewater sector continues to be plagued by severe deficiencies with respect to availability, reliability, sustainability and equity of services. The submission of this plan puts the RIC in the position to assess how well WASA is prepared to manage and minimize the impact on water supply and minimize supply restrictions during the dry season. In fact, the plan will assist WASA in identifying and responding to emergencies (hot spots) that have the potential to impact on customers' supply, while keeping customers informed of water supply issues over the dry season period. In essence, this will allow the RIC to monitor and assess compliance with the implementation of the plan.

In addition to the dry season schedule, the plan will pinpoint the **specific activities to be undertaken before the start of the dry season and outline a timetable for implementing those activities**. Capital expenditure programmes and initiatives as well as operational and maintenance expenditure programmes and initiatives are also to be included. Furthermore, **the plan will specify WASA's capacity to manage and respond to extreme weather events** and emergencies including emergency response programmes. Integral to the success of this plan is WASA's stipulation of actions to determine the capacity of existing telephone and other customer information systems, its public communications strategy and its ability to garner additional financial and human resources as needed.

By way of public information, the final plan which is to be submitted annually by December 31, must also be on display at WASA's offices and be published on its website. Moreover, the service provider is required to draw customer's attention at least twice during the dry season of the availability of the plan and its salient aspects by publishing in the daily newspapers. As the RIC prepares to spearhead the reform of the Water and Wastewater Sectors, proactive measures like this water preparedness plan for the dry season are crucial to its success.

TAP in to this...



■ **The world's water consumption rate is doubling every 20 years, outpacing by two times the rate of population growth. With persistent regional droughts, shifts of the growing population to urban coastal cities, and the water needed for industrial growth, it is projected that by the year 2025 water demand will exceed supply by 56%.**

■ **It is estimated that 97% of the earth's unfrozen freshwater supply is groundwater.**

~ Source: earthwaterglobal.com



Shelly Anne Soonachan
Customer Service Representative

new RICcruit

Shelly Anne recently joined the RIC as a **Customer Service Representative** after devoting the past seven years to the operations, deposits and loans departments at First Citizens Bank Limited, Couva. She has completed a B.A Degree in Business Administration and is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in Human Resource Management from the Heriot Watt University, at the School of Business and Computer Science. We welcome Shelly Anne to our team of dedicated professionals.



Claire Moolchan
Tariff Analyst

new RICcruit

Claire Moolchan's past experience includes conducting research at the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, U.W.I. Previous to joining the RIC, she held duties as Statistician at the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Miss Moolchan holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours), Economics, from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. She has an interest in Statistics and Economic Modelling and has tutored undergraduate courses in Mathematics, Statistics and Economic Statistics. We also welcome Claire to our team.

Annual Complaints Report

Consumer Complaints Get Resolved ☒

RIC'S Performance for 2007

	JAN - DEC '06	JAN - DEC '07
CUMULATIVE		
Number of complaints received	3,922	4,281
Number of complaints resolved	3,343	3,774
Number of complaints unresolved	579	500
Number of complaints withdrawn	68	120
Resolution rate	87%	91%
Rebate/Compensation awarded to customers	TT\$502,875.00	TT\$557,676.00

IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT, YOU MUST FIRST MAKE CONTACT WITH THE SERVICE PROVIDERS (I.E. WASA & T&TEC) AND GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM.
You can do this in a number of ways:

• IN WRITING • IN PERSON • BY TELEPHONE • BY EMAIL

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL WITH -

PETER MOOTOOSINGH



PETER MOOTOOSINGH
Accounts Officer

1. THREE WORDS OR PHRASES THAT BEST DESCRIBE MY PERSONALITY

- 1) Humorous- I have a witty, light-hearted sense of humour that most people could relate to.
- 2) Persevering- I never give up, regardless of how daunting the task may seem.
- 3) Humble- I am very down-to-earth and I believe in treating everyone equally and with utmost respect. I believe that respect should not be demanded but earned.

2. MY CURRENT JOB AND WHAT I LOVE ABOUT IT

I am thrilled to be working in the Finance Department! Not only do my duties include performing work of a financial nature but I also get the opportunity to interact with many people both internal and external to the organisation. Additionally, I have the most supportive manager and team members anyone could wish for. They are a great source of inspiration and motivation to me.

3. MY PERSONAL CREDO AND HOW IT STRENGTHENS MY ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY HERE AT THE RIC

"Failure is never an option" This motivates me to continuously strive to be the very best that I can be, and ensures that whatever the end result, it will always be signed with the hallmark of success.

4. AN OUT-OF-ORDINARY SKILL YOU MIGHT NOT GUESS ABOUT ME

Few people know this but I can cook exceptionally well. Getting good reviews on a newly tried recipe makes it worthwhile!

5. THE ONE PERSON I MOST ADMIRE AND WHY

Oprah Winfrey

She emerged from the humblest of beginnings and a troubled childhood to become one of the most influential and wealthiest people in American history, whilst still maintaining her humility. Her passion for assisting the underprivileged and fight for humanitarian causes are truly admirable.

6. MY FRIENDS WOULD SAY

I am a "neat-freak" and somewhat of a perfectionist.

7. MY GREATEST PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT THUS FAR

Without a doubt, having recently completed the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) final level examinations. Having acquired an internationally - recognised professional qualification such as ACCA is like obtaining a global passport-enabling me to work anywhere in the world and opens up a vast array of opportunities for me.

FAST FACTS

WATER: Despite being the most common substance on earth, 97% is seawater and unfit for human use. Two thirds of the fresh water is locked up in glaciers leaving only 1% of the earth's water for human consumption; this 1% is increasingly threatened by pollution

~ Source: earthwaterglobal.com

RIC ACCEPTS



BUSINESS PLAN - Rate Review Process Begins

With the acceptance of the **Water and Sewage Authority's (WASA)** Business Plan, the Regulated Industries Commission's (RIC) mandate is to achieve a dual purpose as it embarks on the Rate Review process for WASA:

- That of assuring value for money for consumer; and
- Ensuring that WASA can become a viable entity and earn revenue to finance its operations at fair and reasonable rates.

This was revealed at a Press Conference hosted by the RIC on **Wednesday 13th February 2008** at its Port-of-Spain office. In accordance with the RIC Act No. 26 of 1998, the RIC determines the Service Provider's tariffs and encourages efficient economic use of the resources; while monitoring the performance of the Service Provider.

The local water and wastewater sector continues to be plagued by severe deficiencies with respect to availability, reliability, sustainability and equity of services. In fact, the water sector is characterized by

limited water availability with low pressure and/or intermittent water supply as consumers in the rural areas and those not connected to the formal network are among those severely affected. Furthermore, inefficiencies in billing and collections, years of under investment in assets leading to continuous and rapid deterioration of the network and equipment, and increased leakage in wastewater resources have also affected WASA.

In charting the way forward for the sector, the RIC must consider reforming water tariffs and subsidies for delivering affordable water to all through targeted subsidies and 'lifeline' tariffs, while setting goals and targets and holding the service provider accountable, with non-performance being penalized. To make the necessary improvements in the sector, the service provider would have to make improvements, which will impact on those who are currently deprived of a reasonable quality of service. Visit our discussion forum at www.ric.org.tt or send your comments on the Rate Review Process to comments@ric.org.tt.

APPLICATION OF PUC ORDER 83 TO DOMESTIC CUSTOMERS & VAT REGISTERED BUSINESSES

Prior to the establishment of the RIC, the Public Utilities Commission ("PUC") carried out similar functions to those of the RIC. Although the PUC Act was repealed the Orders made under the PUC Act were not repealed and therefore continue to have the force of law. The Public should therefore note the impact of PUC Order 83 in the Levying of Rates and Charges to VAT Registered Businesses.

ACCORDING TO THE TARIFF BOOK TO PUC ORDER 83, WATER RATES AND CHARGES TO VAT REGISTERED BUSINESS CAN BE LEVIED AS FOLLOWS:

NON-DOMESTIC

- a) All connected premises where businesses registered for Value Added Tax (VAT) are conducted.
- b) All connected premises where marketing operations of agricultural Customers which are registered for Value Added Tax (VAT) are conducted.
- c) All connected premises used for the exercise of the functions of any public authority.
- d) All premises or land zoned or used for non-domestic purposes without a service connection within a quarter mile of a public standpipe.

It should be noted that if you conduct a VAT registered business at your home then WASA is entitled to charge Cottage (D) rate which is either:

- D3 - Ummetered - \$300.00 per month; or
- D4 - Metered - \$3.50 per Cubic meter per month or a minimum bill of \$35.00 per month.

In this particular instance, the classification of billing for the premises will change but the premises will continue to receive only one bill. However, where the District Revenue Office/Municipal Corporation has disaggregated or separated the use of various parts of premises within a common boundary, then each part will be classified and billed separately.

In the interest of clarity a copy of the PUC Order 83 is available on our website at www.ric.org.tt.

ADVANCED DISPUTE RESOLUTION Training in Guyana



Three members of staff of the RIC were exposed to Alternative Dispute Resolution training (5th & 6th Nov. 2007) where many important dispute resolution principles were taught. The RIC's legal, customer service and communications departments were introduced to the categories of dispute resolution systems, namely arbitration, mediation and ombudsman schemes.

Additionally, participants developed an appreciation for the effectiveness of mediators who are independent neutrals, committed to helping parties settle, but who do not have a stake in the dispute or the outcome. As an impartial body, this training was very relevant to the RIC.



Customer COMMENDATION

Dear Sir,
I have recently lodged a complaint about frequent power outages being experienced in our area for the past months...You took no time in dealing with the problem by pointing out the matter to the Electricity Commission. The problem was attended too and was resolved. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a special **"THANK YOU"** for your prompt response and to congratulate you on your dedication to the job that you are involved in. I wish that the system we work in would have more people like you.

**Harrydath Soogrim,
LA ROMAIN.**



5TH OOCUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Guyana – Nov 2007

This year marked the fifth annual conference of the **Organization of Caribbean Utility Regulators (OOCUR)** and showcased the work of regulators from around the region. The 3-day conference was staged from 7- 9 November 2007 at Buddy's International Hotel in Guyana. OOCUR is a non-profit organization that hosts these conferences to facilitate the sharing of research, training & development, and the comprehension of regulation issues. The OOCUR conferences ultimately provide an opportunity for regional regulators to network, while sharing information and experience. **AT THE CONFERENCE, THE RIC PRESENTED ON DIVERSE TOPICS AS SHOWN:**

- **"Deploying the Third Wire- Provision of Telecommunications Broadband over Power Lines by the Trinidad & Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) – A Regulatory Perspective"** - Carol Balkaran, Tariff Analyst;
- **"Solving Water Supply Problems through the Establishment of Additional Desalination Plants"** - Gerard E. Rodriguez, Tariff Analyst;
- **"Could Benchmarking really help a Country determine whether there is the need for Service Improvements?"** - Camille Rolingson, Compliance Analyst.

save money on your next electricity bill

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.

COMPUTERS: Set Computers to Sleep and Hibernate

- ◆ Enable the "sleep mode" feature on your computer, allowing it to use less power during periods of inactivity. In Windows, the power management settings are found on your control panel.
- ◆ Configure your computer to "hibernate" automatically after 30 minutes or so of inactivity. The "hibernate mode" turns the computer off in a way that doesn't require you to reload everything when you switch it back on. Allowing your computer to hibernate saves energy and is more time-efficient than shutting down and restarting your computer from scratch.

WATT U NEED TO KNOW

There is a lot of truth in the phrase 'Knowledge is Power,' and as informed consumers, you should be aware of the average wattage and the approximate number of kilowatt-hours (kWh) used in two months by some common appliances that you use. Remember, these are just averages but this useful guide can assist you in adjusting your consumption and usage accordingly.



T&TEC

Consumption and Usage
information courtesy T&TEC.

APPLIANCE	Average Wattage	Estimated Hours Used	Est. kWh Consumed	Bi-Monthly Cost
■ Water Heater - 30 Gallon Double Element	4500	280.0	1,260	\$340.20
■ Ranger (Self-Cleaning Cycle)	2500	5.0	13	\$3.38
■ Shaver	1875	67.0	1	\$0.18
■ Rice Cooker	1500	30.0	20	\$5.27

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).