

## **MODEL CONSUMER CHARTER**

### **CONSUMER RIGHTS STATEMENT**

This Consumers' Rights Statement is a synopsis of rights available under the Electricity Act, 2003 to consumers of electricity, with the twin objectives of enabling consumers to protect themselves by creating an awareness regarding the rights available and the service as well as the level of quality that consumers may reasonably expect from the electricity distribution companies in their area of supply.

#### **I. RIGHT TO KNOW:**

1. Consumers have the following basic rights to have access to information on matters related to electricity supply:
  - (i) The conditions and procedures for getting new connection, disconnection, reconnection, change in load/name/tariff category.
  - (ii) Standards of performance regarding quality to be maintained and services to be provided by Distribution Licensees.
  - (iii) The code of practice on payment of bills.
  - (iv) Complaint handling procedures and grievance redressal.
  - (v) Tariff schedule and other schedule of charges approved by the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission.
  - (vi) Correctness of meter.
  - (vii) To know and choose the electric service provider upon fulfilling certain eligibility conditions under Open Access and implementation of retail competition.

#### **II. PROCEDURE FOR GETTING NEW CONNECTION:**

Consumers have several rights, namely:

1. To receive application form(s) for obtaining new service connections for *LT(single phase/three phase) and HT* and also format of the agreement to be executed at prescribed fee from any of the section offices of distribution licensee in their area of supply.
2. To access the application form and also format of the agreement from the Commissions' *website:www.tnerc.gov.in(Main menu:Regulations, Sub menu:Distribution Code)* in order to download the electronic media version of the application form as well as agreement form.
3. To know the status of their application and information about the reasons of non-disposal or rejection thereof, personal hearing, appeal and removal of deficiencies.
4. To receive a copy of the agreement after the same has been executed for obtaining a new connection.

5. To receive prior intimation regarding the visit/entry into their premises by an authorized representative of the electricity distribution licensee.
6. To demand proof of identity from such representatives of the electricity distribution licensee visiting their premises.
7. To know about the charges that the applicant / consumer has to pay to get the supply/new connection as per schedule of charges approved by TNERC.
  - (1) Tariff related charges,
  - (2) Miscellaneous charges, namely, -
    - (i) Capacitor Compensation charge;
    - (ii) Excess demand charge;
    - (iii) Excess contracted load charge;
    - (iv) Belated payment surcharge;
    - (v) Additional security Deposit, when so called upon;
    - (vi) Service / Line shifting charge;
    - (vii) Name transfer charge;
    - (viii) Reconnection charge;
    - (ix) Consumer meter card replacement charge;
    - (x) Dishonored cheque service charge;
    - (xi) Meter related charges;
    - (xii) Application Registration charge;
  - (3) Minimum charges where applicable
8. To receive supply within the time limit stipulated in the Electricity Act, 2003 read with the Tamil Nadu Electricity Distribution Standards of Performance Regulations-2004 notified by the TNERC after following the correct procedures as laid down in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Supply Code-2004 as well as in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Distribution Code-2004.
9. To receive the receipt of fees and charges paid to the distribution licensee.

### **III. SECURITY DEPOSIT:**

1. It is the responsibility of the consumer to pay security deposit by way of cash/demand draft fixed by the Commission from time to time in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Supply Code-2004 as well as in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Distribution Code-2004.
2. On payment of security deposit in cash/demand draft, consumers have the right to receive interest at bank rate or more as fixed by the Commission from time to time.
3. Excess amount deposited by consumer towards security shall be adjusted against two future demands for the electricity supplied. Where, after such adjustment in future two demands, there is balance to be refunded, the refund shall be made by cheque before the due date for payment of the third demand.

4. Consumer is not required to pay security deposit if he is prepared to take supply through pre payment meter.

#### **IV. METERS:**

1. Consumer has a choice of purchasing a meter himself, or requiring the licensee to provide a meter. In the event of the licensee providing the meter, the consumer is to pay security for the price of meter. Installation and correctness of meter shall be as per the regulations to be made by the Central Electricity Authority.
2. Consumer shall be responsible to ensure that the meter and the security seals are not stolen, damaged or tampered with.
3. It is the responsibility of the consumer to ensure that the security seals provided in the meter box cover and the current transformer chamber after testing the meter are not damaged or tampered with.
4. Consumer has to ensure that the meter is recalibrated periodically and standardised by means of standard instruments by the licensee.
5. Consumers have the right to get the meter tested for accuracy by the licensee, if he considers that the meter is defective. Consumer may apply to the Licensee to have a special test carried out on the meters at any time and the cost of such a test shall be borne by the Licensee or the consumer accordingly as the meter is found defective or correct as a result of such a test.
6. Consumer is also allowed to install a check meter after recalibration by the licensee. Whenever the Licensee's meter becomes defective the check meter reading may be taken for billing.
7. Consumers are required to know the procedures to be followed for replacement of defective / damaged / burnt meter.
8. Consumers shall not refuse to allow a licensee or any person authorized by the licensee for installing, reading, replacing, inspecting and repairing the meter.

#### **V. BILLING:**

1. Consumers shall know that the entry in consumer meter card shall be the bill of demand and there will be no separate issue of bill for LT services. For the HT services, bills shall normally be sent by post or by hand delivery but the licensee takes no responsibility for loss in transit.
2. Consumers have the right to know about the minimum days with regard to due dates and notice periods for payment of tariff related electricity charges.
3. Non-receipt of the bills/assessments will not entitle the consumer to delay payment of the charges beyond the due date.

4. LT consumers are not required to pay the Belated payment surcharge during the notice period. Belated payment surcharge during the notice period is leviable for the HT consumers. If the last day of the due date happens to be a holiday, the due date shall be extended to till the next working day.
5. Consumers will have the right to get refund of excess amount along with interest at the applicable rate for security deposit in the case of over charging by the licensee.
6. It is the responsibility of the consumer to lodge complaint three days prior to the due date for payment if there is error in billing. However, the consumer shall not on the plea of incorrectness of the charges, withhold any portion of the charges.

#### **VI. MODE OF PAYMENT:**

Consumers have right to know:

1. The mode of payment of bills in cash or demand draft on local bank or cheque drawn on a bank at the headquarters of the designated authority of distribution licensee in the case of HT supply and bills for LT supply in cash or by money order or by demand draft on local bank, or by cheque drawn on a bank where the distribution section office is located. However, local bodies and railways may issue cheque on the banks situated in the place of their office and the licensee may claim the collection charges, if any, from such consumers.
2. For HT consumers licensee may allow the consumer extension of time to make payment beyond the expiry of the notice period allowed for payment, on an application made to the designated authority of the distribution licensee, subject to the levy of BPSC as specified in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Supply Code-2004.
3. Consumers have to pay the service charges for dishonor of cheque as stipulated by the Commission in addition to the following:
  - (a) Low Tension Consumers : Additional service charges @ 1% of the dishonored cheque amount subject to a minimum of Rs.500/-
  - (b) High Tension Consumers: Additional service charges @ 1% of the dishonored cheque amount subject to a minimum of Rs.1000/-
  - (c) The concession of restoration of cheque payment facility shall not be given in case the consumer has issued dishonored cheque subsequently.
4. Consumers can also opt for depositing electricity charges in advance.

## **VII. RIGHT TO RECEIVE NOTICE AND DUE PROCESS PRIOR TO DISCONNECTION AND PROCEDURE OF RECONNECTION:**

Consumers have a right:

1. To receive minimum fifteen clear days' notice in writing before disconnection under default of payment under section 56 of the Act.
2. To pay under protest an amount equal to the sum claimed from him or the electricity charges due from him for each month calculated on the basis of average charge for electricity paid by him during preceding six months, whichever is less, pending disposal of any dispute between him and the distribution licensee.
3. To know that an arrear of charges which is more than two years old can be recovered only if it has been continuously shown as recoverable as arrear.
4. To know about restoration of supply by the licensee after collecting the electricity charges or other sums together with any expenses incurred by the licensee in cutting off and reconnecting the supply from the consumers as stipulated in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Supply Code-2004.
5. Right of prior notice is not available in cases where the consumer's installation poses a danger to the health or safety of other consumers or electricity supplier's employees or the public, and in cases where the consumer is indulging in theft or unauthorized use of electricity.

## **VIII. STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE OF ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES:**

Certain Standards of Performance of the electricity distribution licensee are guaranteed under the Tamil Nadu Electricity Distribution Standards of Performance Regulations-2004 notified by the TNERC. Consumers have a right to know the standards to be maintained by the distribution licensee on the following services and compensation to be paid to the affected consumers.

- (1) Duties of the Licensees to Supply on Request
- (2) Temporary Supply
- (3) Shifting of Service Connection / Deviation of Lines and Shifting of Equipments
- (4) Transfer of Service Connection
- (5) Change of Tariff
- (6) Complaints in Billing, etc.
- (7) Replacement of Meter
- (8) Interruptions and Restoration of Supply
- (9) Quality of Supply
- (10) Permissible Limits for Voltage and Frequency Variations
- (11) Voltage Complaints
- (12) Failure of Equipments
- (13) Responding to Consumer's Complaint
- (14) Making and Keeping Appointments

- (15) Grievance Handling
- (16) Handling of Complaints on Non-compliance
- (17) Compensation
- (18) Procedure for Payment of Compensation
- (19) Level of Performance
- (20) Information on Standard of Performance
- (21) Service Reliability

#### **IX. CONSUMER SERVICE CENTRE:**

Consumers have a right to visit personally or to communicate with the help of any medium of communication to consumer service centres established by the electricity distribution licensee to get information or to lodge the complaint. The consumer service centres will provide essential services including facility for payment of bills.

#### **X. COMPLAINT HANDLING AND GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL:**

Consumers have the right to get their grievances redressed in accordance with the regulations on Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum and Electricity Ombudsman Regulations -2004 notified by the TNERC under the provisions contained in Section 42(5),(6) and (7) of the Electricity Act, 2003. A synopsis of the rights available to consumers is provided below:

1. To demand from cash collection centres and offices of the distribution licensee copies of the procedures for lodging complaints at free of cost or to download the complaint format from the Commissions' **website: *www.tnerc.gov.in(Main menu: Regulations, Sub menu:Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum and Electricity Ombudsman Regulations -2004)***
2. To know from the distribution licensee —
  - 2.1. The manner and the form in which a grievance may be made to the Forum;
  - 2.2. The assistance available from the Forums.

#### **XI. DISPLAY ON THE ELECTRICITY BILL:**

1. Website address of the Distribution Licensee.
2. Printing of the following statement in the applications/bills/receipts issued by the licensee(TNEB) as per sub-regulation(1) of Regulation 6 of Regulation for Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum and Electricity Ombudsman-2004.
  - (a) *“Consumers whose grievance is not redressed by the official of the licensee may approach the Consumer grievance Redressal Forum(CGRF).”*
  - (b) Address of Chairman / CGRF, telephone numbers, e-mail address.
3. Summary of Standards of Performance shall be mandatorily printed in vernacular language on the back side of the electricity bill.