

Guideline on Electricity Billing

1. Background

When a consumer of electricity supplied by a distribution licensee is to be charged for the supply wholly or partly by reference to the quantity of electricity supplied, then, unless otherwise agreed between the consumer and the distribution licensee, the supply shall be given through, and the quantity of electricity shall be ascertained by, an appropriate meter or meters (Schedule III, 1(1) of the Electricity Act.No.20 of 2009).

The distribution licensee may, in the normal course of business, estimate the amount of electricity consumed by the consumer and recover charges accordingly, so long as the estimated consumption is confirmed by a meter reading within a reasonable period of time (Schedule III, 5(1) of the Electricity Act.No.20 of 2009).

Consumers have a right to get their electricity usage estimated only as specified in the methodology approved by the Commission and to know the details of and clarifications on the methods adopted by the licensees in estimating the usage of electricity (Rights and Obligations of Electricity Consumers (ROEC), Part II, E8, E9).

Consumers have a right to get the register of meter ascertained and an electricity bill issued once in every thirty (30) days \pm three (3) days (i.e. 27 to 33 days period) (ROEC, Part II, E(2)).

When issuing bills and collecting charges from consumers for the electricity supplied, in order to enhance the efficiency of the services provided by the licensees and to avoid consumer grievances/ disputes, licensees are guided to meet their obligations in accordance with the requirements stated above.

2. Estimated Bills

Where the consumption of electricity has been estimated by a distribution licensee, the consumer shall pay for any electricity consumed in accordance with the estimate prepared by the distribution licensee or otherwise determined in accordance with the provision relating to dispute resolution (Schedule III, 5(3) of the Electricity Act.No.20 of 2009).

Estimated bills are issued by the licensees when, electricity supply is provided in the absence of a meter/s, meter/s are defective, invisible or not accessible to read etc. In such events, to estimate the energy supplied, licensees shall select the appropriate methodology given in the "Methodology for Estimation of Energy Supplied" published by the Commission. Strictly following such procedure will eliminate consumer grievances/ disputes to a greater extent and the licensees will be able to directly recover the charges for the estimated consumption.

Otherwise, it has to be recovered in accordance with the provision relating to dispute resolution.

3. Billing Period

Billing period plays a major role in domestic tariff category than other tariff categories. The rates applied to supply of electricity used for domestic purposes in private residences are different for different blocks. Consumption blocks are based on a 30 day billing period and the number of units in a block is prorated according to the number of days in each billing period, as it is not practical to measure the consumption of electricity in all residences exactly during a 30 day period always.

Further, fixed charge is determined based on the average consumption per 30 days during the billing period and the usage charge will vary according to the consumption with respect to the billing period. Domestic consumers, who plan to pay a particular amount for electricity bill monthly, maintain their daily average electricity consumption accordingly. For such consumers, the total monthly bill will be significantly low/high, if the billing period is significantly lower/higher than 30 days. Consumers who receive bills for lower amount will settle them comfortably, while consumers who receive bills for higher amount will undergo difficulties in settling the bills on time and to avoid disconnections.

In order to avoid such situations, the billing period is limited to 30 ± 3 days as agreed by the licensees in their Supply Services Code. Therefore, licensees are guided issuing electricity bills strictly within the period of 30 ± 3 days every month. The licensees who fail to do so shall grant reasonable additional time on request for the affected consumers to settle the electricity bills issued in excess of $30 + 3$ days.

4. Transferring other charges into monthly statement of account

The Distribution licensees (DLs) may recover any charges) applicable as per the section 27 and section 28 of Sri Lanka Electricity Act as amended, Section B (1) (d) of Part II of ROEC and 3.2.1(c) of Supply Services Code and monthly installments and loans taken by customer from or through DLs. These charges may be included and recovered through customer's monthly statement of account. DLs are guided to separately include electricity sales related dues and all installments in the monthly statement of account so that disconnections and disputes can be handled separately.

5. Dispute Resolution

Any dispute arising with regard to electricity billing can be forwarded to the respective Deputy General Manager of the Ceylon Electricity Board or Head of Operations of the Lanka Electricity Company (Private) Limited as a Dispute Resolution Officer under PART I of the Electricity (Dispute Resolution Procedure) Rules Published in Gazette Extraordinary No. 1951/1 dated 25th January 2016.

Where the parties to a dispute referred fail to reach a settlement which is acceptable to both parties, either party to the dispute may inform the Commission and call upon to resolve the same through mediation under Part-II of the above Rules.