

ELECTRICITY CONSUMER CHARTER OF ZAMBIA

GET TO KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN ELECTRICITY CONSUMER

OVERVIEW OF THE CHARTER

In order to enhance the quality of electricity services by ZESCO, an Electricity Consumer Charter was developed after nationwide stakeholder consultations. Subsequently, the Charter was adopted and launched on 15th February 2007.

The key aspects of the process leading up to the development and features of the charter are as follows:

- ❖ ERB recognised the need to develop a Charter aimed at protecting consumers and ensuring the obligations of the utility and the regulator are rightly stated;
- ❖ The process began in 2004 when ERB informed ZESCO of its intention to begin work on the Charter under USAID sponsorship. Meetings were held with USAID, ERB & ZESCO to signal start of project. A series of public meetings were held in all provinces in two phases facilitated by HM Consulting of Lusaka;
- ❖ ERB & ZESCO attended the country-wide consultation consultations undertaken by consultants, as observers;
- ❖ Valuable information obtained during meetings and pointed to the fact that an energy information gap exists in Zambia;
- ❖ The charter is an embodiment of obligations and rights of parties and their promise and commitment to uphold and to respect such rights and obligations;
- ❖ It is not legally binding, but a pledge of trust and commitment among the regulator, utility and consumer. There are pros and cons to both legally and non-legally binding charters. However, for the purposes of consumer education and efficacy in Zambia, the non-legally binding strategy is being employed;
- ❖ Will help to strengthen relationship with consumers & consumer bodies as it will help educate the public about the concept of paying for electricity. It will be a constant reminder of the customer care pledge; and
- ❖ The charter has been published in poster-size formats in English and seven main local languages and will be placed at strategic points to emphasise the utility's commitment to good customer service.

RIGHTS:

All consumers have the right to:

- ❖ Have access to reliable and safe electric power consistent with the power supply network in their area;

- ❖ Receive clearly and complete billing information about charges, terms and conditions for available services, and to be charged only according to their contract terms.
- ❖ Receive accurate and timely bills;
- ❖ Access to information about service connection, quality of service, service problems, meter reading, billing procedures, service charges, price structure, complaint procedures, disconnection and termination of service, and pay points;
- ❖ Receive advance notification that ZESCO intends to terminate service and be told the circumstances under which service can be terminated;
- ❖ Access to fair, courteous and expeditious complaint resolution mechanisms to redress grievances and seek settlement measures;
- ❖ Be treated equally to other similar customers, free of prejudice or disadvantage; and,
- ❖ Privacy and to have confidential information respected and protected.

OBLIGATIONS

With electricity consumer rights also come consumer responsibilities to:

- ❖ Pay electricity bills in full, promptly and honestly;
- ❖ Observe the terms of his/her electric service connection contract;
- ❖ Pay in advance applicable security deposits for electric service;
- ❖ allow the record of consumption to be reflected in the appropriate metering device faithfully and accurately without interference;
- ❖ Not use electricity for any other purposes other than the contracted terms and tariff category;
- ❖ Allow ZESCO's employees/ representatives access to the customer's premises in reasonable time for purposes of inspection, installation, reading, testing, removal, replacement or disposal of the utility's apparatus/ electric watt-hour meter;
- ❖ Give prior notification to ZESCO when intending to change residences;
- ❖ Not use electricity unlawfully via illegal connections, metering tampering or any other device that interferes with normal operation; and,
- ❖ Cooperate with and support programmes on the effective and efficient use of electricity.

Most electric service problems are best solved by first contacting your local ZESCO customer service centre. If you have problems or complaints, please contact the ZESCO customer service 24-hour at:

01 363-636 or 097 913 - 636

If ZESCO representatives are unable to address your electricity problem, then further consumer queries may be made with the Energy Regulation Board (ERB). The ERB regulates the energy sector and works to protect consumer rights.

ERB is located at Premium House, 8th floor, Nasser Road, Lusaka, erb@erb.org.zm or (260) (1) 236-002 telephone, the ERB exists to safeguard consumer's interests.

UTILITY OBLIGATIONS

- ❖ Provide reliable electricity;
- ❖ Provide safe power;
- ❖ Dispatch accurate bill in good time;
- ❖ Respond to faults in a timely manner;
- ❖ Educate consumers on energy tips;
- ❖ Be proactive when handling complaints; and
- ❖ Notify consumers on planned power outages

REGULATOR'S OBLIGATIONS

- ❖ Regulate the provision of energy services to consumers;
- ❖ Monitor the efficiency and performance of energy companies;
- ❖ Receive and investigate complaints from consumers and licensed energy companies.
- ❖ Balance the needs of energy consumers and energy companies;
- ❖ Educate consumers on their rights, obligations and responsibilities; and
- ❖ Carry out enforcement on erring utility.