



## A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO ELECTRICITY BILLS

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As a consumer it is your responsibility to pay the bills for the electricity you use. Besides, you have to pay the bills in time so that the licensee can supply you the electric power in right quality and quantity. Failure to pay the bills may lead to disconnection.

In order to facilitate easy payment of bills, the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) has made it mandatory on the part of the licensee to provide you with the bill in time and with full details. The KERC (Electricity Supply) Code, 2004 has been issued which, among others, contains the provisions relating to:

- ✓ Billing procedures
- ✓ Information to be contained in the Bill
- ✓ Bill payment procedures
- ✓ Billing disputes resolution

### HOW A BILL IS PREPARED?

It is the duty of the Electricity Supply Company (ESCOM) to notify the periodicity of billing, date of meter reading, bill date and due date for payment in a calendar month. The ESCOM shall issue a bill to each consumer for the electricity and/or other services rendered.

The bill is prepared on the basis of meter reading. In case meter is not provided to a consumer the ESCOM shall prepare the bill based on the procedures approved by the KERC.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF THE METER IS NON-RECORDING?

In case the meter is non-recording, the ESCOMS will issue a bill based on the previous SIX months average consumption. In such cases the ESCOM shall replace the meter immediately.

In case the ESCOM is unable to read the meter for any other reason (like the customer's premises is locked) an estimated bill is issued based on previous SIX months average consumption. Subsequently the meter is read in the next billing cycle and the bill amount is adjusted in accordance with the meter reading.

#### WHAT IS THE TIME LIMIT TO ISSUE THE BILL?

The Bill shall be issued within FOUR days from the meter reading date and the bill date shall not be more than FOUR days from the meter reading date. In case of spot billing, meter reading and bill date shall be the same.

#### WHAT IS A METER CARD?

The meter card is a document intended to record the meter reading. It is the responsibility of the ESCOM to provide and maintain with the consumer a meter card for recording the meter reading.

#### WHAT IF BILL IS NOT RECEIVED?

If you do not get the bill within SEVEN days after the specified meter reading date do not keep quiet. It is your responsibility to inform the local office of the ESCOM about the delay. The ESCOM will then arrange to issue a duplicate bill **immediately free of cost.**

#### WHEN THE BILLING PERIOD IS DIFFERENT?

In case the ESCOM issues a bill which covers a period not consistent with the billing period or a period during which the consumer's tariff changes, the ESCOM must charge in proportion to the relevant periods and clearly show the relevant working details on the Bill.

#### DELIVERY OF THE BILL?

Normally the Bill shall be delivered by hand. However it can be sent also by post or courier. In case the consumer so desires, the bill can be sent by electronic means (email) capable of generating a delivery confirmation report.

## WHEN IS THE FIRST BILL ISSUED?

In case of new installations the first bill will be issued within TWO months of service. If there is delay, the consumer should inform the local office of the ESCOM. The ESCOM will then arrange to issue a bill immediately.

## RECOVER OF ARREARS?

The ESCOMS cannot recover any arrears after a period of TWO years from the date when such sum became first due. However if the amount is shown continuously as arrears in the Bill, then the ESCOM can take action to recover the arrear amount.

## REFUND OF EXCESS AMOUNT PAID

In case it is established that the ESCOMS has over charged, the excess amount so collected shall be repaid by the ESCOMS within TWO months with interest at bank rate.

## WHAT A BILL SHOULD CONTAIN

The bill shall contain the following information:

- ❑ Name, address of the consumer, Revenue Register (RR) number and address of the issuing office
- ❑ Period covered by the bill, type of service and the tariff applicable to the consumer
- ❑ The dates and readings of current and previous meter readings
- ❑ Present consumption, contract demand, sanctioned load, power factor etc.
- ❑ Details about other charges like fixed/demand/minimum charges, energy, taxes, rebates and Net amount payable.
- ❑ Wheeling charges and surcharges if any to be shown separately if the ESCOM provides only network service
- ❑ The amount of arrears or credits outstanding to the consumer's account
- ❑ Summary of payment methods and details of additional charges such as interest and penalties, if any
- ❑ Last date of payment without penalty and action for non-payment after the due date

- ❑ Designation, address and telephone number of the official of the ESCOM with whom complaints can be lodged
- ❑ Contact details of the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum and Ombudsman.

#### HOW TO ACCESS INFORMATION ABOUT PREVIOUS BILLS

If the consumer needs any information relating to the previous billing period it shall be provided by the ESCOM free of cost. However if the information pertains to periods prior to the previous billing period, the ESCOM may collect a reasonable service charge.

#### PROCEDURE FOR PAYMENT OF BILLS

The ESCOM can specify the procedures for payment of bills. Normally bills can be paid at the local office of the ESCOM during the designated working hours of any working day. However the ESCOM can also arrange any other facility for payment of the bill for the convenience of the consumers. The ESCOM can also specify its accepted mode of payment of bills. The ESCOM shall publicize the details of mode of payment for the benefit of the consumers.

#### WHAT IS THE TIME LIMIT FOR PAYMENT OF BILLS

The bill is to be paid within FIFTEEN days from the bill date. If the due day falls on public holidays, the next working day shall be treated as the due date. The ESCOM will issue a receipt as proof of payment. In case of belated payments, interest as approved by the KERC for the actual number of days of delay from the due date may be charged by the ESCOM.

#### WHAT HAPPENS IF THE BILL IS NOT PAID IN TIME

If the consumer fails to pay the bill within the due date, the ESCOM may after giving not less than FIFTEEN clear days notice after the due date, disconnect the supply. The notice issued by the ESCOM shall:

- ❑ *Specify that the consumer has defaulted the payment by the due date*
- ❑ *Notify the consumer that failure to pay the amount due will entitle the ESCOM to disconnect or restrict the supply of service to the premises*

- *Outline the availability of payment options, including the installment option*

#### IS PAYMENT IN ADVANCE ACCEPTED

Yes. If a consumer wishes to make advance payments towards electricity he/she can do so. The amount so paid shall be adjusted accordingly against the bills raised subsequently on the consumer. The ESCOM may allow incentive if such advance payment is made for TWELVE or more months.

#### IS PAYMENT IN INSTALLMENT ALLOWED

Yes. In case the consumer is unable to pay the bill in one lump sum, he/she should inform the ESCOM. The ESCOM may offer an installment payment option. However grant of installment facility is without prejudice to payment of interest on belated payment.

The ESCOM has the right to deny an installment option to a consumer who has defaulted in payment of periodic bills in the previous 12 months.

#### WHAT IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF DISHONOR

In case the payment instrument (cheque etc.) issued by the consumer is dishonored the ESCOM may initiate action for disconnection for non-payment. The ESCOM has the right to resort to any other legal proceedings against the consumer in such cases.

#### HOW DISPUTES OVER THE BILL ARE SETTLED

##### ***a. Rectification when additional information is not required***

If there is a mistake in the Bill, the consumer may approach the ESCOM for rectification. The ESCOM will rectify the mistake within 24 hours if no additional information is required.

##### ***b. If additional information is required***

In case additional information is required, the ESCOM shall review the bill within SEVEN days of request as specified in the KERC (Standards of Performance) Regulations 2004. In such a cast the consumer shall deposit a sum equal to the amount claimed or the electricity charges due calculated

based on the average of past SIX months, whichever is less, pending disposal of any dispute between the consumer and the ESCOM as provided in the Electricity Act, 2003.

If the review establishes that the bill is incorrect the ESCOM shall issue a revised bill and appropriately adjust the bill amount.

If in the review it is found that the consumer was overcharged, the amount so overcharged along with interest at bank rate may be adjusted in the subsequent bill or refunded as agreed to by the consumer. In case the consumer is undercharged, the ESCOM may recover the amount undercharged by issuing a bill.

***c. Contents of the bill and Time limit for payment***

The consumer should be given at least THIRTY days time to pay the bill. The ESCOM while issuing the Bill shall specify the amount to be recovered as a separate item in the consumer's next bill with details or as a separate bill with details for the amount.

The ESCOM shall not charge interest on the amount under charged and may allow installment option. In case the consumer fails to pay the bill within the due date, the ESCOM may charge interest on the bill amount as approved by the KERC.

While issuing the bill, the ESCOM shall advise the consumer in writing his right to prefer an appeal against the decision in the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum and further to the Ombudsman.

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For more information:

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