

**Before**

**UTTARAKHAND ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION**

**In the matter of:**

UPCL's initiatives towards providing better consumer's services with respect to meter reading, billing and collection.

**Coram**

**Shri Anand Kumar      Member**

**Date of Order: 17 March, 2011**

**ORDER**

The Commission passed an Order dated 09.07.2004 directing UPCL to address the long standing grievance of the consumers and provide better consumer's services with respect to meter reading, billing and collection. The Order contained a number of specific directions on each of the above aspects.

2. Due to non-compliance of the directives of the Commission the Commission imposed a onetime penalty of Rs.1 lac and a continuing token daily penalty of Rs.2500 on the licensee with effect from the date of the Order payable within 30 days of close of each calendar month till such time complete compliance of the Order is made.

3. The Commission observes that despite levy of such harsh penalty the situation has not improved at the ground level. Realisable arrears of the licensee are increasing year after year. The honest consumers willing to pay their bills on time have to wait for long hours for making payments and suffer indignity and

indifferent attitude and behaviour of the licensee's staff, thereby not facilitating them to come to the collection centres and pay their bills. It is an irony that the licensee who is experiencing severe resource crunch is not able to get the money deposited from the willing consumers. To reverse the trend the licensee should ensure to open up more collection windows at each collection centres depending upon the consumer being served so that the bills of the consumers are deposited in minimum time possible. Licensee must also make arrangements especially in big cities where a consumer of any area may deposit his bill at any cash counter in the city. The licensee should also explore the possibility of introducing online bill payment facility. Staff must also be given instructions for dealing with consumers in a pleasing manner.

4. The licensee should ensure that all the collection centres in the urban as well as rural areas have proper shed, adequate drinking water facilities, fans, if required, and proper sitting arrangement for the consumers coming to pay their bills. During the hearing on Tariff Order petition of the licensees at Dehradun on 11.03.2011 the Commission has taken a view that that the accrued penalty paid by the licensee against the Order dated 09.07.2004 shall be utilised for improving consumer services relating to billing/bill collection arrangements.

5. One of the major grievances of the consumers is that they are not receiving the bills in time. Supply Code Regulations of the Commission very clearly state that the delivery of the bills to the consumers should be made such that the consumer gets at least 15 clear days before the due date for payment of the bills. The licensee shall ensure to educate the consumers regarding the provision of a grace period of 15 days after due date by which the current bill can be paid without the levy of delayed payment surcharge. Display boards regarding the above should be put up at each collection centres. This shall go a long way in reducing long queues and mitigating the hardships faced by the consumers in depositing their bills.

6. The Commission on its own got the inspection done of the licensee's collection centres and it was found that the bill collection staff had either not reported for duty on time or were not performing their assigned work despite long

queues at the counter. The licensee must ensure strict action against such erring employees if any report is lodged against them. The collection centre at Bhandari Bagh Sub-division, a model Sub-Station declared by the licensee, was found to be unkempt. The licensee no doubt invested money in the collection centre; however, it failed to maintain it in proper order. The Commission is of the view that UPCL should make a provision for upkeep of the collection centres in their budget if not being done presently.

**In the light of the above the Commission orders that:**

- i) UPCL should deposit token daily penalty of Rs.2500 pending for the period 01.06.2010 till 31.03.2011 for this financial year by 31.03.2011.
- ii) Submit concrete time bound plan including budget required for upgrading the billing/bill collection arrangements in the State in line with the Commission's Order dated 09.07.2004.
- iii) Ensure compliance of the above directions and submit a compliance report at least for Dehradun town within one month and for the remaining within three months of the issue of this Order. The compliance reports shall be submitted by their respective General Manager (Distribution).

**-Sd-**  
**(Anand Kumar)**  
**Member**