

THE ELECTRICITY OMBUDSMAN, UTTARAKHAND

Hotel President
6, Astley Hall, Rajpur Road,
Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Vs

Executive Engineer,
Electricity Distribution Division (Central),
Uttarakhand Power Corporation Ltd.
18, EC Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Representation No. 41/2017

Order

The petitioner, M/s Hotel President has filed this appeal against the order dated 31.10.2017 of the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum, Garhwal zone (hereinafter referred to as Forum). Petitioner has claimed that while his average consumption for 2016 (instead of the whole year petitioner has only referred to average of 3 months August, September and October) has been 25373 units and that of 2017, 15653 units, a bill for the month of August 2016 of 52000 units is not acceptable. Petitioner has also raised the issue that if the meter reading for the month of August 2016, is correct, then what is the reason for arrear adjustments of Rs. 24,700.00 allowed by the department without any explanation. Petitioner has also explained that since no new work has been taken up nor has there been any equipment failure, it is not possible that the meter reading for year 2017 decreases drastically by 29160 units compared to the previous year. They have therefore requested the Ombudsman to intervene in the matter. In their subsequent submission dated 05.12.2017, the petitioner has requested for refund of excess amount paid by them due to wrong billing.

2. The Forum in their order have quoted from the representation of the petitioner wherein petitioner has argued that because of an error in the meter, consumption disproportionate to their use, has been reflected in their bill, and against an average consumption of 18500 units per month they received a bill of 52000 units for the month of August 2016. Forum have explained through the comparison, given by the respondent for an 18 month period from January 2016 to 30.06.2017, between figures

obtained through STVM reading slips and MRI report, and have concluded that there is only a difference of .54% between the two readings over an 18 month period. The spurt in the consumption shown for the month of August 2016 is because the STVM reading has been taken at an interval of more than the laid down 30 days whereas the bill is actually for a period of 37 days. Further, there has been an error in the punching of the reading because of which instead of 32000 units 52000 units were punched. Similar error has been committed for the month of September, October and November and because of this error, unrealistic consumption was shown for which Forum have held the opposite party UPCL responsible and directed that the concerned employees be tasked to improve their work practice. The Forum, while giving directions to the respondent, to observe adequate care in the punching of the bill and also ensuring that the meter reading is taken for 30 days have given no orders regarding the complaint.

3. The respondent in their written statement, have quoted average consumption of the consumer to be 18893 for 2015, 19867 for 2016 and 16590 for 11 months of 2017. Respondent have also indicated that the meter reading filled by the meter reader for the month of August 2016 was defective and for this reason decided to give the consumer benefit of bill revision for August 2016 in the bill of December 2016, however, they have also indicated that this revision given to the consumer will have to be computed again and will need to be charged to the consumer (it may be pointed out that the petitioner had in his complaint claimed that the Rs. 24,700.00 adjustment allowed to him in the bill of December 2016 without any explanation is proof that the bill for August 2016 was indeed excessive)
4. Both parties have been heard and the record available has been carefully perused. The respondents were asked to submit the following documents. I) Copies of bills from July 2016 to December 2016 ii) MRI report from July 2016 to December 2016. The respondents have submitted these documents vide their letter dated 08.02.2018. Following points are clear from the record i) Forum have refrained from passing an unambiguous order regarding the complaint while conceding that petitioner's grouse of an excessive bill for the month of August 2016 was correct. They have also, through comparison between STVM and MRI, and the total billing for the month of August to November, concluded that in the ultimate analysis, no extra charges were levied on the consumer, compared to his consumption over a 4 month period, and particularly as compared to the 18 month average, 31.12.2015 to 30.06.2017 ii)

Despite standing instructions for meter reading of connections above 5 KW through KCC (Key Consumer Centre) i.e. through computerized billing, based on MRI, a consumer of 75 KW has been subjected to billing based on manual readings with attendant problems of irregular readings and incorrect punching. iii) bills for the period September to November as per metered units have shown consumption of 10120 units, 14000 units and 4760 units respectively totaling 28880 units for these 3 months. Obviously if petitioner has been given a bill for 52000 units for the month of August 2016 whereas the cumulative bill for 3 months i.e. September, October and November is 28880, it seems illogical. Perusal of the monthly bills and the MRI for the entire period i.e. August 2016 to November 2016 however reveal that the consumption as worked out by multiplying difference between the two readings by M.F. (being 40) is 80880 and 84527 units respectively. This difference of consumption is explained by the fact that while the MRI reading is updated at 00 hours, on first day of each month, the manual reading has been taken for the month of August on 12.09.2016 and for the month of November on 02.12.2016 resulting in less recording of 10 days of consumption compared to the MRI report. It is therefore evident that there is no fault in the meter and for the 4 month period there is no excess charging to the petitioner since the excess charged for the month of August 2016 has been adjusted through manually doctored readings in 3 months (September, October and November 2016). As observed by the Forum the wrong punching resulted in excessive consumption being shown for the month of August and much less consumption than the actual consumption for the months of September October and November 2016. Forum have extended a warning to the respondent for observing adequate care in recording readings so that this kind of inconvenience is not caused to consumers. An adjustment of Rs. 24,700.00 was given in the bill for the month of December 2016 which was subsequently withdrawn in the bill for the month of December 2017, as is clear from copies of these 2 bills submitted by the respondent vide their letter dated 08.02.2018. Although no explanation for these entries has been given by the respondent however, the effect of adjustment given in December 2016, stands nullified.

5. From the material available on record, it is clear that no relief is called for to the petitioner since adjustment of extra units charged in the month of August has already been allowed in the bills of subsequent months, namely September, October and

November 2016. Findings recorded by the Forum in their order dated 31.10.2017 are upheld. Petition is dismissed. Action taken by the respondent against the concerned staff as directed by the Forum may be reported within 30 days.

Dated: 20.02.2018

(Vibha Puri Das)
Ombudsman