ELECTRICITY CONSUMER’S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Capacity Building of Electricity Consumers

Booklet on the rights and responsibilities accorded to an electricity consumer by various codes and regulations in Rajasthan

BASK RESEARCH FOUNDATION
CUTS INTERNATIONAL
1. **RIGHT TO INFORMATION**

Consumers have the right to get information and updates about the following topics:

a. Process of getting a new connection, revision in load/name/address, disconnection and reconnection

b. Standards of performance and supply code

c. Information on the character of service for various categories applicable

d. Grievance redressal and complaint handling mechanism

e. Rajasthan Energy Regulation Commission (RERC) approved Tariff schedule and sundries.

f. Accuracy of energy meter

g. Right to be aware of and choose electricity provider under open access for the enactment of retail competition as per the regulations mentioned in Electricity Act 2003, Section 42(4).

2. **RIGHT TO BE NOTIFIED**

Electricity consumers have all the rights to receive a formal notice before disconnection of supply or any other action. Also, the process of reconnection shall be made available for consumers. This right is not available only for the cases where the consumer’s facility is prone to health or safety hazards.

3. **REGISTRATION OF COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL**

As per the provisions of Electricity Act 2003, consumers have the right for redressal of their grievances. Following is a brief of rights available to consumers:

a. To get a copy of rules and procedures for redressal of grievances from offices of electricity distribution companies and cash collection centers.

b. To know the contact details of Internal Grievance Redressal (IGR) and Electricity Ombudsman.

c. To know the modes of filing a grievance, procedures, and circulars issued in the subject. If the conflict cannot be resolved by IGR cell, a consumer can raise the complaints to Electricity Ombudsman.

d. IGR, Forum, and Ombudsman are required to give their decision within 2 months.

e. Other than, Cell, Forum and Ombudsman, consumer can also lodge their complaints in ‘Consumer Forum’ under consumer protection act

   In Rajasthan, electricity distribution company have to establish consumer service centers for consumers to get information and lodging complaints. There are other modes for lodging complaints as well such as Social Media (Twitter etc.), WhatsApp, RajSampark Website, Mobile Applications etc.
In addition, as per RERC regulations, the Discoms are also required to establish various forums for redressal of monetary and non-monetary grievances as well. The Consumer can also approach the office of electricity ombudsman for any default in services of Discom which are not resolved by these forums in stipulated time period or if he is not satisfied with the resolution provided.

4. PUBLICATIONS BY DISCOMS

Consumers have rights to buy below-listed documents at nominal cost from consumer service centers, division office, circle office, section office or ward office. These documents should also be available on the website of the distribution company.

- Consumer rights statement
- Electricity supply code
- Standards of performance regulation
- Terms and conditions of supply
- Schedule of charges
- Tariff Schedule

5. BILLING

1. Due date of electricity bill shouldn’t be less 21 days away from the date of receiving for domestic consumers.

2. Recovery of an outstanding amount cannot be made after two years without mentioning it in the previously issued bills.

3. An average bill can be issued to a consumer at most 3 times consequently.

4. A consumer doesn’t need to pay the due amount of incorrect bill, he/she can pay the average amount of the previous six months and record their protest.

6. METERING

a. It is not compulsory for a consumer to buy a new meter at the time of getting new connection.

b. It is the responsibility of distribution company to record the meter reading at least once in three months for agricultural consumers and once in two months for domestic consumers.

c. In case, the meter cannot record reading for any reason or is stolen, the electricity consumed during this period shall be calculated as per supply code.
d. A consumer can request for testing (either in the company’s utility centre or labs authorized by commission) and test report in case of doubt about accuracy. The testing and replacement charges are defined by supply code clause 29.

e. If the premise is locked at the time of meter reading or inaccessible for two billing cycles, the licensee cannot discontinue the supply of electricity without issuing a notice of not less than 7 days.

7. NEW CONNECTION

a. Application forms required by consumers should be available free of cost at distribution company offices. These forms can also be downloaded from Discom’s website.

b. In case, where there is no need of extending distribution lines (i.e. within 50 meters of existing lines for LT consumers) or commissioning of sub-stations, the licensee is obligated to release connection within one month of receipt of the completed application.

c. A consumer has right to receive the acknowledgment of successful submission and status of application.

d. In case, the extension of distribution lines is required for releasing the connection, the licensee shall complete the extension work within one month after depositing the additional sum worked out or intimated in supply code.

e. An applicant can opt to provide the electric line or electric plant required for releasing the connection by paying up to 15% of expenses as supervision charges only to the licensee. Licensee shall supervise the work and provide technical consultation.

f. Licensee shall release a priority list for releasing the connections and also adhere to it.

g. The licensee is liable to pay the interest on security deposit to the consumer.

h. A consumer does not need to pay any security for pre-paid meters.

i. A consumer can ask Discom employee for identification card and purpose of visit before admitting them in the premises.

8. TRANSFER / TERMINATION OF CONNECTION

a. Consumers have the right to get connection transferred on their names in case of ownership transfer or death of the previous consumer by giving his consent in writing duly attested by Notary Public. All the forms required for this should be available free of cost in Discom offices.

b. The electricity company has to process the application within 2 billing cycles else Discom need to pay Rs. 100/- week to the consumer.
c. Except for legal heirs, Discoms can’t hold new consumer liable for arrears more than 6 months of the previous consumer.

d. A consumer can also club the existing connection, in this case the security deposit may be adjusted against the security deposit already available with the licensee.

e. A consumer is not allowed to decrease the sanctioned load prior expiration of the initial period of the agreement. However, the consumer can apply for load reduction or permanent disconnection after expiration of agreement by giving one month of notice to the licensee.

9. STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

The consumers have the right to receive the copy of guaranteed Standards of Performance (SoP) by RERC. The distribution company is bound to comply with the standard of performance failing which, the company needs to pay compensation to the consumer.

10. UNAUTHORIZED POWER USAGE / THEFT

a. A consumer should be given a fair chance to present their case by addressing officer prior to imposing any penalty.

b. The consumers have the right to pay a compromise amount and own up their offence.

c. The authorized officer should provide a copy of inspection memo and cause to consumer in case of any unauthorised power usage found.

d. The authorized officer can break in the premises in case of having sufficient reasons to believe that unauthorized consumption of power is being practiced.

e. If due to any reason consumer can’t pay the amount as per the appellate authority within 7 days, the consumer should receive a notice of 15 days before disconnection of supply.

f. A consumer found guilty or in suspicion of electricity theft can make an application to the Empowered officer for compounding after initiation of legal proceedings by accepting to pay a compounded sum of money. The acceptance to paying a sum of money for compounding will make sure that no proceedings will be instituted or continued against the consumer.

11. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONSUMERS

a. Paying the bill timely and completely is the responsibility of the consumer.

b. The consumers should get wiring of their premises done by a licensed electrical contractor and should be inspected in every five years to prevent fire and safety hazards.
c. The consumers should install energy meter at an accessible place for taking the reading.

d. If the consumer is traveling out of station and meter is locked inside the premises, the consumer should inform the Discom in advance to avoid disconnection due to inability to read meter.

e. A consumer should take due care of the meter and should install it at a secure location.

f. Any kind of tampering and manipulation in the meter is illegal.

g. A consumer should ensure proper earthing of energy meter and internal wiring.

h. The connected load should not be more than sanctioned load, although this is not considered as power theft, sanctioned load should be increased whenever required.

i. Electricity connection should not serve the purpose for which it was allotted. For example, the use of domestic supply for commercial purposes is considered as unauthorised consumption.

j. Electricity lines should not be illegally extended by a consumer to sell electricity to other subordinates.

k. A consumer should report the events of power theft or unmetered energy consumption.

l. The consumers should be aware of all the energy-saving measures and use it responsibly.

m. The consumers should not damage the property of Discoms and should report such incidents if witnessed.

n. The consumers should follow the proper channel and the basic code of conduct for protesting and should not misbehave with Discom officials in any case.

o. The consumers should identify and contribute to consumer service organizations functional in their area.

p. The consumers should participate in regulatory affairs, RERC public hearings, etc. to express their opinions.