

# دليل قرارات الفصل في شكاوى المشتركين

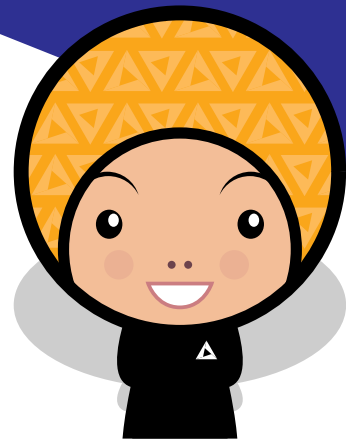
كيف يمكننا مساعدتك؟

# Guide to determinations

How can we help you?

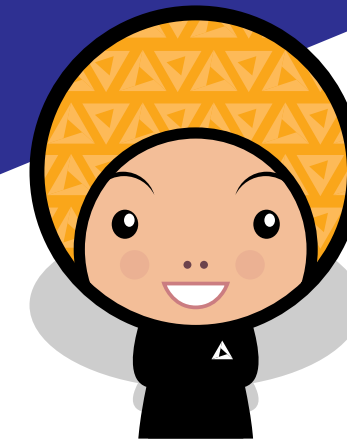
## قل 'مرحباً' لمنير و منيرة

نحن هنا لتلقي الضوء على قضايا المشتركين،  
لنساعد على حل أي نزاع لديكم  
مع موزعي و مزودي الكهرباء، و  
نعرفكم على حقوقكم كمشاركين.



هيئة تنظيم الكهرباء - عمان  
AUTHORITY FOR ELECTRICITY REGULATION, OMAN

[www.aer-oman.org](http://www.aer-oman.org)



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## Say 'marhaba' to Munir and Munira

We are here to bring customer issues to light,  
to help resolve any disputes that you may have with  
your electricity supplier, and to inform you of your  
rights as a consumer.

# Customer Complaint Handling Procedure

If you need any help or advice please contact us:

- Tel: 2460 9700
- Fax: 2460 9701
- Email: [enquiries@aer-oman.org](mailto:enquiries@aer-oman.org)

Write to us at:

Authority for Electricity Regulation, PO Box 954, PC 133, Al Khuwair, Muscat

or visit us at:

Third floor, Bait Al Reem Building (behind the Ministry of Housing), Al Khuwair

لا تنسے إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مساعدتنا، أو أخذ مشورتنا  
يرجى الاتصال بنا على النحو التالي:

► الهاتف: ٢٤٦٠٩٧٠٠

► الفاكس: ٢٤٦٠٩٧٠١

► البريد الإلكتروني: [enquiries@aer-oman.org](mailto:enquiries@aer-oman.org)

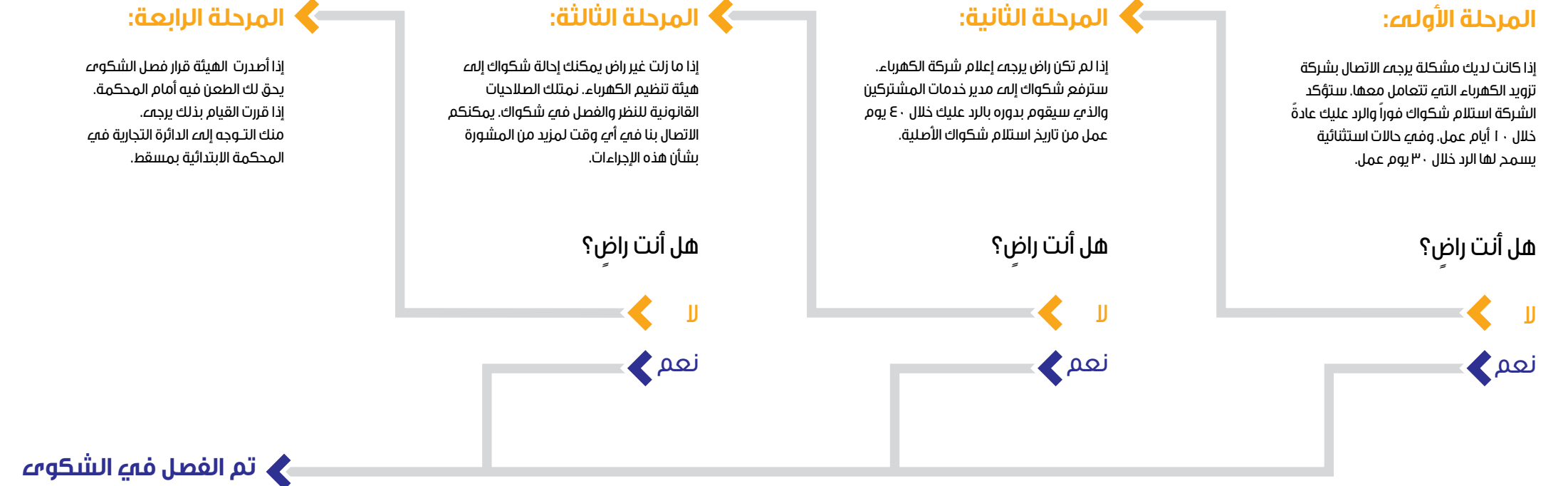
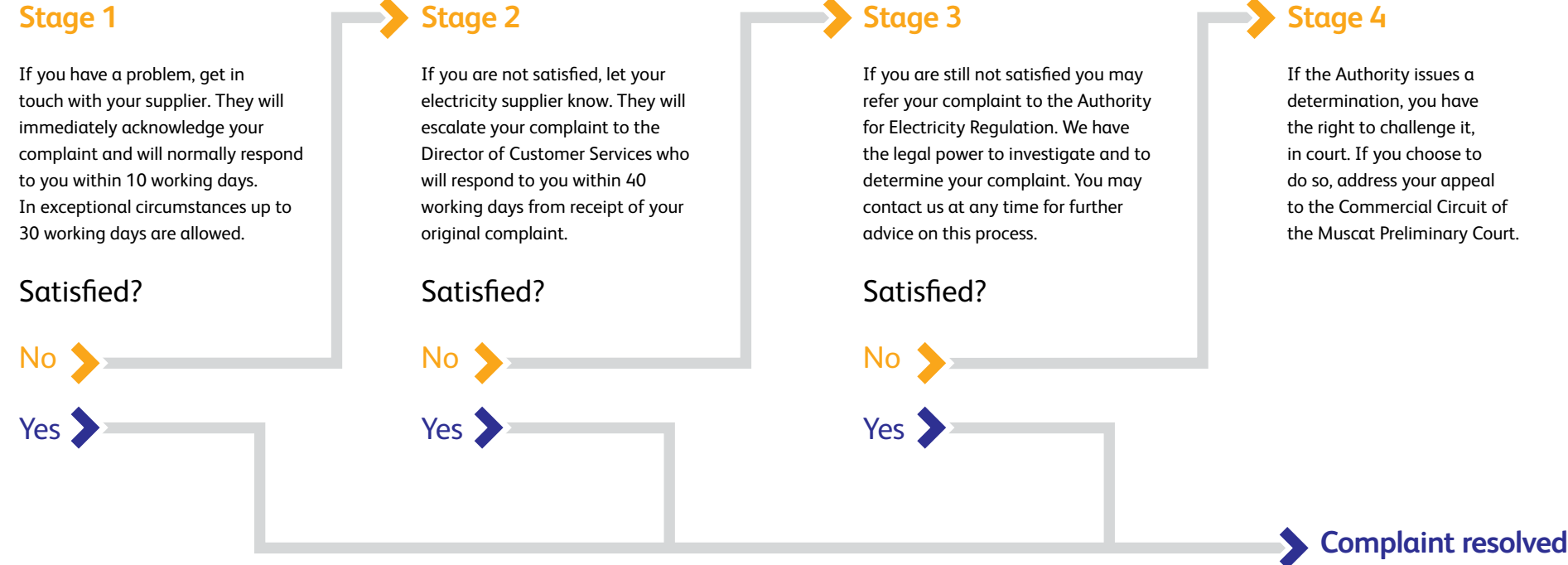
راسلنا كتابياً:

إلى هيئة تنظيم الكهرباء، ص.ب ٩٥٤، الرمز البريدي ١٣٣، الخوير، مسقط

أو قم بزيارتنا:

الطابق الثالث بمبنى بيت الريم (خلف وزارة الإسكان)، الخوير

# إجراءات معالجة شكاوى المشتركين





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# Introduction



**This Guide describes the precedent Determinations made by the Authority for Electricity Regulation, in accordance with the Authority's legal powers to resolve disputes arising between customers and licensed electricity companies, as provided by the Sector Law.**

It attempts to do so in a simple and clear manner for the benefit of licensed companies, potential investors, customers and other stakeholders, but must not be taken as committing the Authority to a particular course of action, in any specific case. This is because, when making each Determination the Authority has a duty to take account of the specific individual circumstances of each case, including the reasonable expectations of licence holders and customers at the time the Determination is made.

## Nevertheless:

- ▶ it is expected that electricity companies will take careful note of the information summarised in this document. They should apply the underlying principles to assist with handling complaints from their customers as quickly as possible. The Authority does not expect to have to make a series of repeat determinations in respect of similar cases.
- ▶ It is hoped that customers and other stakeholders who read this Guide will gain a better understanding of the principles that would apply to any dispute they may have. This should assist them in resolving a dispute with their electricity company and/or advising customers of their rights.
- ▶ It is hoped that the Guide will help Customers and other stakeholders understand what the Authority may say if a dispute with their electricity company cannot be satisfactorily resolved and the customer chooses to refer the dispute to the Authority, in accordance with the published Complaint Handling Procedure.

If there are cases summarized in this Guide that you feel are of particular interest or relevance to you, we encourage you to review the full Determination. Copies of the full Determination for each dispute are available from the Authority's website at [www.aer.oman-org](http://www.aer.oman-org). We also encourage you to familiarise yourself with the Authority's guide to Customer Problems and Disputes (How Can We Help You). These documents are also available on our website.

The Authority will review and update this document from time to time but hopes that Customers, licensed companies and other stakeholders will feel free to suggest modifications that would make this document clearer, or more easy to use.

Please address any such comments to:

**Director of Customer Affairs**  
**Authority for Electricity Regulation**  
**PO Box 954**  
**PC 133**  
**Al Khuwair**  
**Muscat**



# Customer billing disputes

**Electricity distribution and supply companies have a responsibility to ensure that customers' bills are timely and accurate.**

**This includes ensuring that:**

- ▶ meters are accurate and maintained in proper working order
- ▶ meters are read regularly and accurately
- ▶ customers receive timely and regular bills



Where companies repeatedly fail to meet these obligations the Authority has determined, in relation to a series of previous disputes, that the customer's liability to pay for electricity consumed during the period in which the service delivery failed to meet the expected standard, should be limited to the equivalent of not more than 12 months' reasonably estimated or accurately metered consumption.

In addition, where a large debt has accrued to the customer's account, as a result of a service delivery failure by the company, the customer should be allowed to repay the outstanding sum by instalments, over a reasonable period of time.

In other cases, where there have been problems existing for a period of less than 12 months, or where the company has made a good effort to resolve the problem, but the customer was still unhappy with his bills, the Authority has determined that Customers should pay their bills.

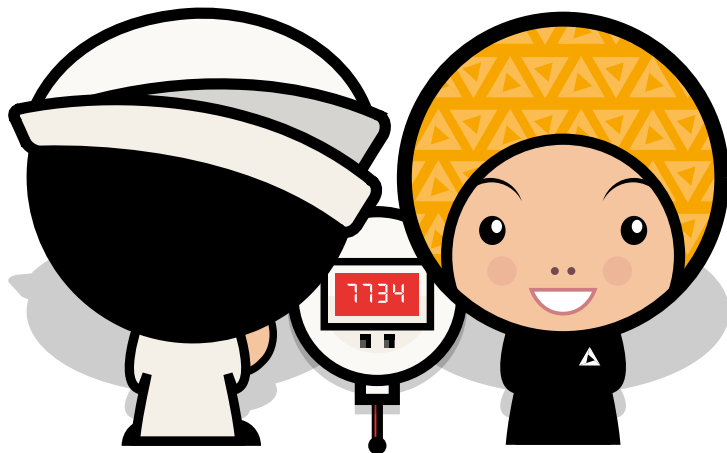
At present the Authority is considering whether a shorter period of liability should apply in some cases, for example, where the company has shown negligence after having been duly advised of a problem by a customer and the company has failed to respond.



## Meter accuracy and meter reading

▶ The Authority's first determination, in 2005, concerned the case of a Customer whose meter had not been read properly for a period of around 8 years, because the meter reader had not been properly trained to read a 3 phase meter. When the company discovered this problem it sent the customer a bill for unbilled consumption in the sum of RO1635.110. The company suggested that the customer should have known that his bills were too low and drawn the matter to its attention. It also said that it was unable to make a claim for the error made by its meter reading contractor and had no other option than to seek recovery from the customer.

▶ The Authority determined that it was the company's responsibility to identify the problem caused by its failure to read the meter properly, not that of the customer. The Authority determined that the customer's responsibility to pay for unbilled consumption was limited to the equivalent of 12 months consumption and not the 8 years demanded by the company.



▶ A customer in Al Ghubrah complained that he received a high bill, in the sum of RO750.475. It was discovered that his meter had not been read for a period of 10 months during 2008 and 2009 because there was damage to his meter box, obscuring the register. The reason for the high bill was a series of under-estimated readings. The customer's meter was also tested and was found to be functioning normally. The company adjusted the customer's bill from RO750.475 to RO630.005 to better reflect the number of units charged at different tariff slab rates.

▶ The Authority determined that the company had taken appropriate action, given that the customer's liability to pay for electricity consumed during a series of estimated readings was only limited where it exceeded a period of 12 months, the meter had been found to be working normally and the company's calculation was reasonable.

▶ A customer in Al Maabelah complained that he received a high bill for May 2005, in the sum of RO1157.210. It was discovered that his meter had not been read regularly for a long period of time. The customer's meter was tested and was found to be functioning normally. The company recalculated the customer's bill on the basis of the lowest slab rate. The company issued the customer a revised bill in the sum of RO716.740.

▶ The Authority determined that the customer's liability should be limited to no more than 12 months and compared the revised bill with the customer's consumption during the same 12 month period in the following year, during which period the meter had been read regularly. The amount to be paid by the customer for the month of May 2005 was reduced to RO237.843.

▶ A customer complained about his bill for the month of August 2008, in the sum of RO119.800. His meter readings had not been taken regularly during July and August 2008. His meter was tested and found to be functioning normally. The company compared his consumption with the same period in the previous year, when his meter was read properly and credited his account in the sum of RO22.875.

▶ The Authority determined that the actions taken by the company were reasonable. The customer was required to pay the revised bill.

## Customer not provided with regular bills

▶ A customer who was being supplied with electricity had not received a bill for a period of more than 5 years, as a result of the contractor's failure to properly register the customer's details in the billing system. When this was finally discovered the customer was presented with a bill for RO2137.600, representing his consumption during that entire period. The company said that the customer was aware that he was not paying for electricity supplied to him and should have brought the matter to its attention. It argued that it could not make a claim against its contractor and had no option but to seek recovery from the customer.

▶ The Authority determined that it was the company's responsibility to ensure its billing system was accurate as the customer had provided the appropriate details. The company had a duty to provide the customer with regular and accurate bills. The Authority determined that the customer's responsibility to pay for unbilled consumption was limited to the equivalent of 12 months.



## Customer bills incorrectly calculated

▶ A customer in Madinat Qaboos noticed that his bills were being calculated on the basis of a commercial tariff, rather than a residential tariff. He discovered that this had been happening for some years previously, but said he had not really noticed the mistake before. He now expected his supplier to recalculate his bills for the whole period.

▶ The Authority determined that the customer's bills should be calculated on the basis of the residential tariff, but that the customer had a responsibility to check the bills that had been presented to him. The company's liability was therefore limited to 12 months and the company was asked to recalculate his bills for the previous 12 months only, on the basis of the residential tariff and to refund the appropriate overpaid amount.

▶ A customer complained that his meter had not been read regularly. He had then received a very large bill for the month of June 2008. The Authority considered that the customer's estimated bills during the period in which his meter was not read were too low. As a result his bill for June 2008 included a large number of accumulated units that were charged at a higher slab rate than would have applied if they had been spread over the period when his meter was not read.

▶ The Authority determined that the Customer's bill should be recalculated on the basis of a lower slab rate, resulting in a credit of RO62.570 to the customer's account.



## New meter and higher bills

▶ A customer complained that his bill for December 2008, in the sum of RO368.470 was too high and was much higher than his previous bills. It was discovered that the customer's meter had been replaced in May 2008 as a result of damage to the meter. In addition the customer's meter had not been read regularly after the new meter was installed.

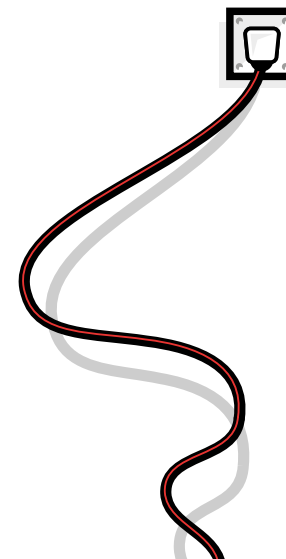
▶ The Authority compared the customer's bill during the period May to December 2008 with his bills during the same period in 2009 and found that there was very little difference in consumption. The Authority determined that the bill for December 2008 was accurate and the customer should pay the sum demanded.



## Disconnection

▶ A customer complained that he was disconnected without having been sent the required notifications and that his meter had not been read regularly between April and November 2009. He had also experienced difficulty in paying sums that he was not disputing with the company. The customer asked the Authority to award compensation for inconvenience caused to him.

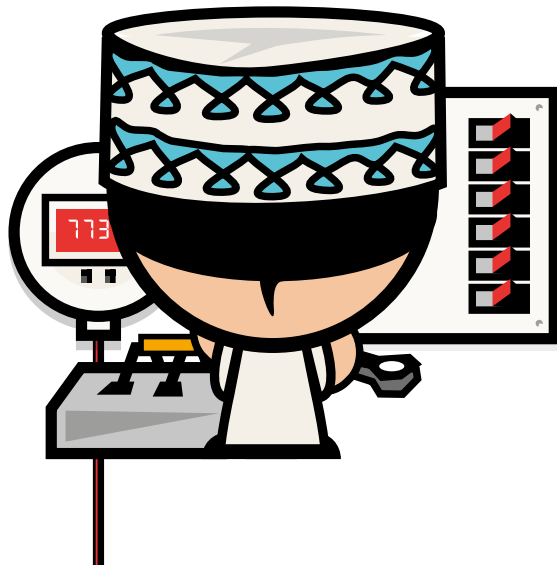
▶ The Authority considers disconnection to be a serious matter and asked the company to provide evidence that it had complied with the approved disconnection procedure. It did not do so but instead provided a statement that its agent is aware of and follows the disconnection procedure. The customer's supply had been reconnected so it was not necessary for the Authority to make a determination on that issue, but it did determine that there was no evidence that the disconnection procedure had been followed properly and the disconnection and reconnection fees debited to the customer's account should therefore be refunded. The Authority also noted that the customer and the company had now reached agreement about the bills for the period April to November 2009.





# Meter tampering

Where customers can be shown to have interfered with their electricity meter (or other company assets) electricity companies are entitled, in accordance with the Sector Law, to impose a fine on them. Where there is evidence of meter malfunction they are also entitled to charge the customer for electricity consumed but not paid for.



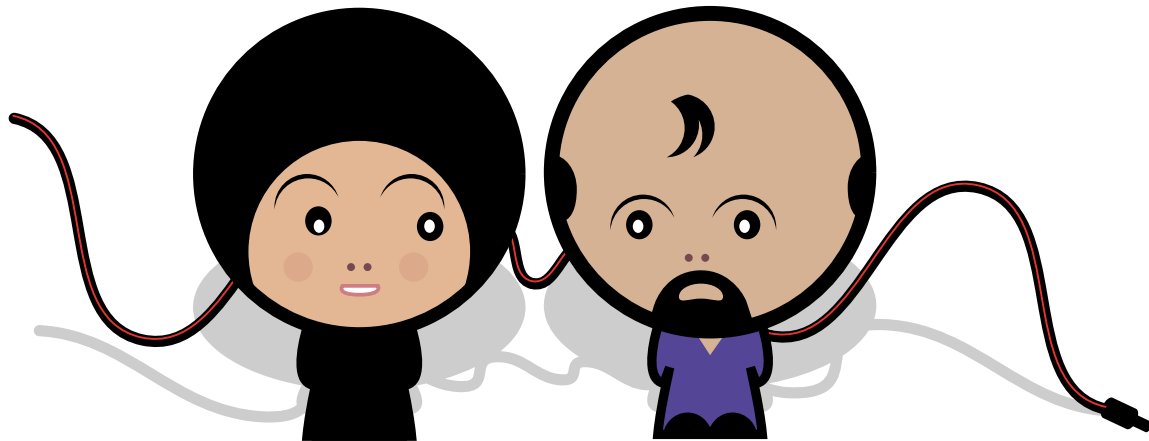
▶ A customer complained that, following a routine meter exchange, a fine of RO300.000 was added to his account for meter tampering. In addition he was charged a sum of RO143.963 for under-recovered revenue, as a result of the meter under-recording his consumption during the 12 months preceeding the removal of his meter. The company stated that the old meter had been destroyed to prevent its reuse.

▶ The Authority considers meter tampering to be a very serious offence. Fines may be levied on proven offenders in accordance with the Sector Law. However, the Authority also considers that companies should make every effort to obtain and retain proof of such an offence. Charges for under-recovered revenue should also be fairly calculated, using the best available estimates of consumption in a similar period, during which an accurate meter was installed. In this case the Authority determined that the fine of RO300.000 should be waived, as a result of the lack of evidence provided by the company. The Authority also determined that the charge for under-recovered revenue should be based on the same 12 month period following installation of a new accurate meter. It was therefore reduced to RO87.777.

▶ A customer complained that he was fined a sum of RO500.000 for meter tampering and that the charge of RO54.600 for under-recovered revenue was too high.

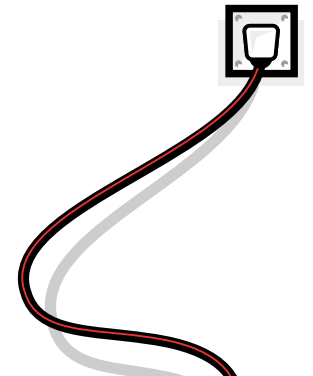
▶ In this case the Authority determined that the fine of RO500.000 should be waived, as a result of the lack of evidence provided by the company. The Authority also determined that the charge for under-recovered revenue should be based on the same 12 month period following installation of a new accurate meter. On this basis it was reduced to RO19.296.

# Landlords' and tenants' responsibilities for historic debts

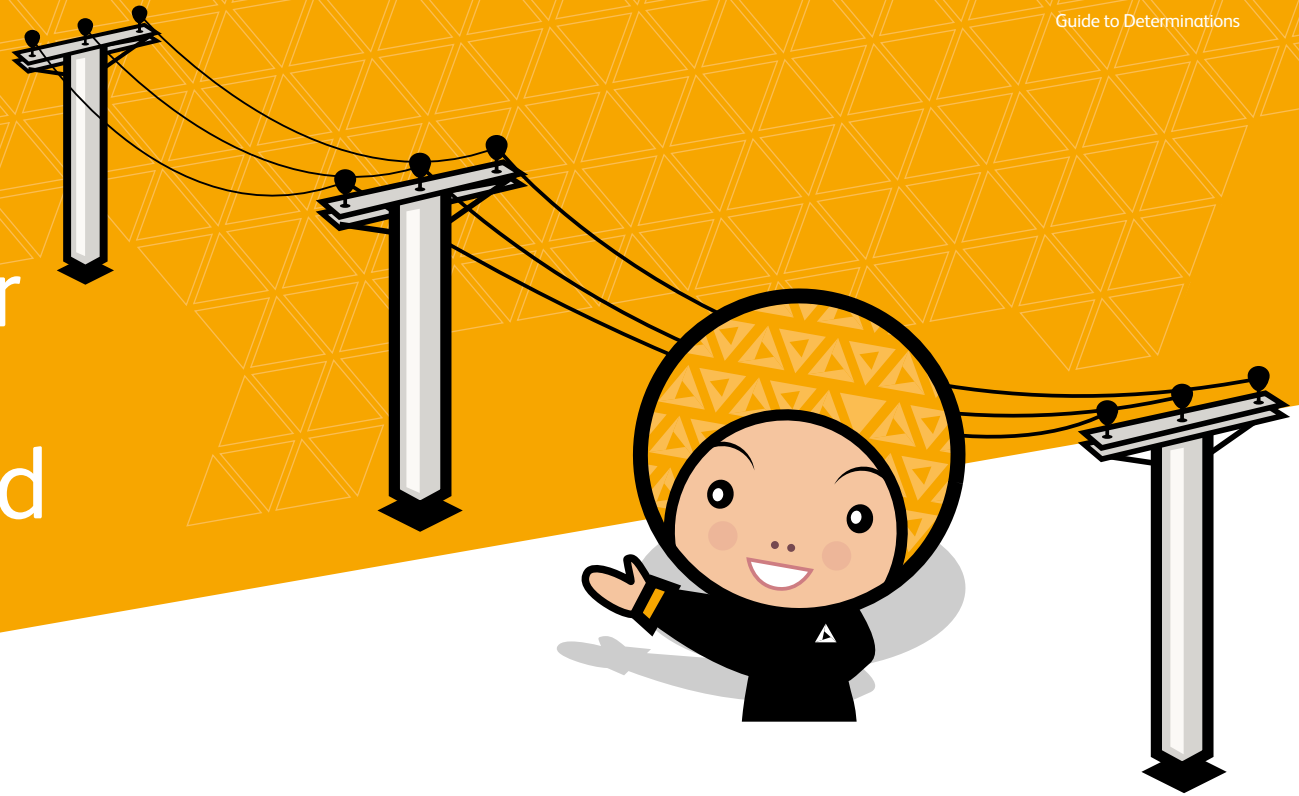


The Sector Law provides that the supply of electricity to Customers may be disconnected for non-payment of amounts due. Where a properly registered tenancy exists and is provided to the relevant supply Company, the tenant is to be regarded as the Customer and his supply may not be disconnected (nor may disconnection be threatened) in relation to non-payment of an historic debt owed by either the landlord or by any previous tenant.

Supply Companies shall also ensure that following receipt of a properly registered tenancy only the Customer's (tenant's) name shall appear on bills and the landlord's details shall be removed.



# Customers asking for electricity company assets to be relocated



As Customers extend their plots of land, or buildings, many naturally wish that electricity poles, wires and sub-stations placed on their land are moved, in order to reduce the inconvenience. In considering disputes relating to requests to relocate assets the Authority takes account of a number of key factors, **including whether:**

- ▶ the assets are actually located on the customer's land or adjacent to his land
- ▶ the assets were in place prior to the customer's ownership of the land
- ▶ the assets were constructed with appropriate approvals
- ▶ there are any safety related issues

The Authority will also examine the evidence provided by the customer's land ownership certificate (Mulkiya), the Krooki and the asset construction approvals provided by the electricity companies.

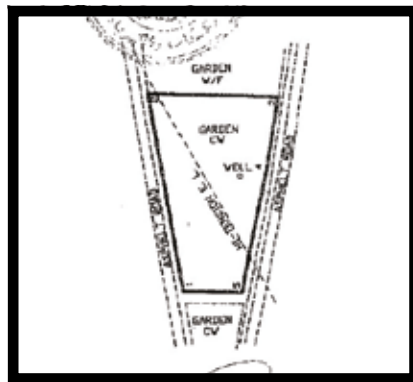
Where the assets were in place before the Customer's ownership of the land and were constructed with proper approvals, the Authority has determined that Customers should pay for assets to be relocated.

Whilst each case will be judged on its merits the following examples serve to illustrate the Authority's considerations and decisions.

## Relocation of electricity poles at Barka

▶ A customer had owned a plot of residential land at Barka since July 2005 and asked the Authority to determine that the company should pay for the removal of two electricity poles and an overhead line situated on his plot.

▶ The Authority's investigation found that the line was clearly shown on the Krooki issued in May 2005. The Authority determined the complaint in favour of the company.

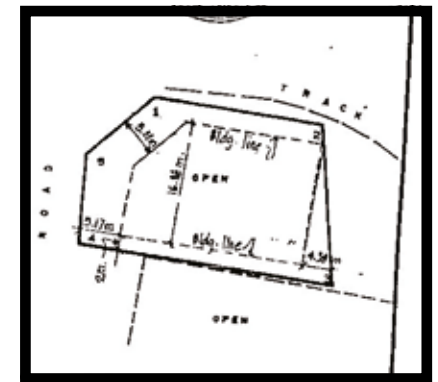
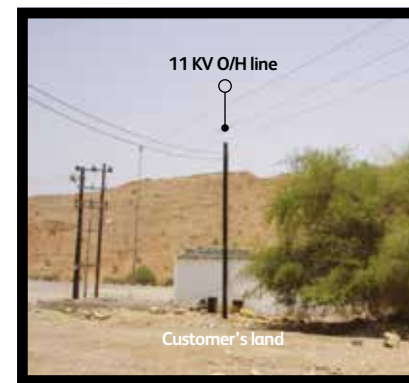


The krooki on the right clearly shows the electricity line running across the centre of the plot.

## Relocation of 11KV line in Rusayl

▶ A customer had owned a plot of land in Rusayl since 1979 and asked the Authority to determine that the company should pay for their removal of an 11 KV that crossed his plot.

▶ The Authority's investigation found that the line was not shown on the Krooki issued in 1997. The company failed to provide evidence that the line was constructed with the necessary approvals. The Authority determined the complaint in favour of the customer.

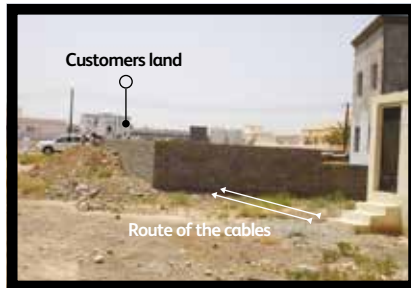


The krooki on the right does not show any electricity line crossing the customer's plot of land. The track shown on the krooki is that on the right hand side of the photograph.



## Relocation of underground cables in Maabelah

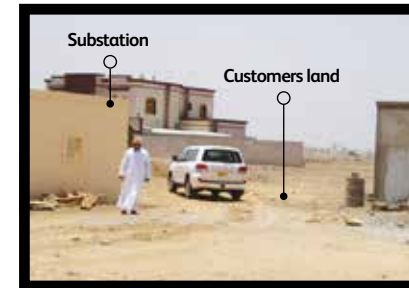
- ▶ A customer owned a plot of land in Maabelah and was granted an extension to his plot in April 2008, as shown on the Krooki. During construction work he discovered the existence of 2 underground cables and asked the Authority to determine that the company should pay for them to be relocated.
- ▶ The company provided approved drawings that demonstrated the lines were constructed prior to April 2008, in accordance with approved drawings and were indicated by markers. The Authority determined the complaint in favour of the company.



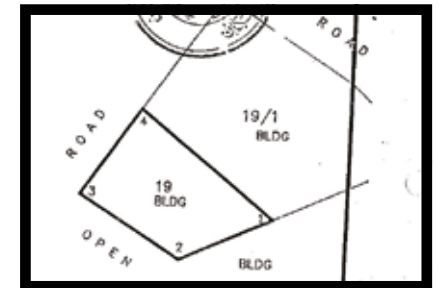
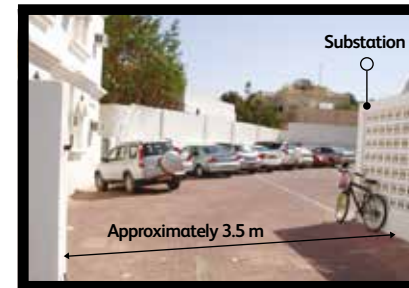
The photographs above show the substation and the new structure being constructed by the customer (the photograph on the left) and the existence of a cable marker that was placed between the sub-station and the customer's land (on the right) clearly demonstrating the route of the underground cables leading from the sub-station

## Relocation of sub-stations in Madinat Qaboos and Maabelah

- ▶ Two customers owning land in Maabelah and Madinat Sultan Qaboos asked the Authority to determine that sub-stations located near to their properties should be moved at the companies' expense. In neither case was the sub-station located on land owned by the customer.
- ▶ The Authority's investigation revealed that the sub-stations were 7 and 3.5 metres from the customers' premises, with appropriate safety measures in place and could not be found to constitute a safety risk. The Authority determined the complaints in favour of the companies.



The photograph on the left clearly shows that the substation in Maabelah was separated from the customer's plot of land by a track. This is also clearly shown on the krooki, which illustrates the customer's plot of land (190) in the centre of the photograph with the sub-station just in front.



The photograph on the left clearly shows the sub-station in Madinat Sultan Qaboos, approximately 3.5metres from the customer's premises. The krooki on the right shows the empty plot of land on which the sub-station was constructed.

# Connection and metering of separate premises



**In some cases, customers whose premises are sub-divided are confused about when a separate meter can be provided and when a connection charge should be aggregated. The Authority takes the view that a separate meter should be provided where the premises have both a separate mulkiyah and the essential facilities for independent living. That is, a separate distribution board, a discrete entrance, a kitchen and bathroom and appropriate living accommodation.**

If a new connection or separate meter is requested by a customer and facilities for independent living are not present the building should have a single account and there should be a single aggregated connection charge for the total connected load.

► In 2011 a customer in Sohar completed two new premises in a building he had first developed in 2005. He obtained three separate mulkiyahs and applied for a separate supply of electricity to each premises. This was rejected by the company who informed him that the building constituted a single load. He was charged a connection fee of RO362,000. The company stated to the Authority that it was concerned that customers would manipulate matters in order to benefit from lower connection charges.

► The Authority determined that the connection fee of RO362,000 should be refunded. The Authority considered that if the same applications had been made by different persons the company would have been unlikely to reject the applications. The Authority also takes the view that the customer had taken considerable care to establish legally separate premises and that the costs of doing so are likely to outweigh any savings from the alleged manipulation of connection charges. The Authority asked the company to revise its connection charging statement to clarify this point.



# موزعي الكهرباء في منطقتك

Your electricity supplier

أين أنت؟  
Where are you?



**Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC**  
2447 3200  
[www.reefiah.com](http://www.reefiah.com)

**Mazoon Electricity Company SAOC**  
8007 7771  
[www.mzec.co.om](http://www.mzec.co.om)

**Majan Electricity Company SAOC**  
8007 8000  
[www.majanco.co.om](http://www.majanco.co.om)

**Muscat Electricity Distribution  
Company SAOC**  
8007 0008  
[www.medcoman.com](http://www.medcoman.com)

**Dhofar Power Company SAOC**  
2323 2555  
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