

*REPORT
OF THE COMMITTEE
TO EXAMINE CONSUMER
GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION SYSTEM
OF PSPCL*



*PUNJAB STATE ELECTRICITY
REGULATORY COMMISSION*

**SUBJECT:- REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE CONSTITUTED TO EXAMINE
THE ISSUES REGARDING RESOLUTION OF CONSUMERS'
COMPLAINTS.**

1.0 CONSUMER PROTECTION & ELECTRICITY LAWS

The consumer remains the focus of the reforms in the electricity sector with the enactment of The Electricity Act, 2003. The commitment of the law makers in terms of safeguarding consumers' interests gets reiterated right in the preamble of the Act which reads as follows:

*"An Act to consolidate the laws relating to generation, transmission, distribution, trading and use of electricity and generally for taking measures conducive to development of electricity industry, promoting competition therein, **protecting interest of consumers** and supply of electricity to all areas, rationalization of electricity tariff, ensuring transparent policies regarding subsidies, promotion of efficient and environmentally benign policies, constitution of Central Electricity Authority, Regulatory Commissions and establishment of Appellate Tribunal and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."*[emphasis added]

The Act makes elaborate provisions to protect the interest of consumers and the National Electricity Policy & the Tariff Policy framed under section 3 of the Act further reinforces these provisions. The relevant provisions are discussed below:

LEGAL PROVISIONS TO PROTECT CONSUMERS' INTEREST

(i) Universal Service Obligation of the distribution licensee

Section 43 of the Act provides for universal service obligation for the distribution licensee to provide connection to a consumer within a stipulated period of time, failing which the licensee is liable to pay compensation to the affected consumer as per sub-section 3 of section 42. The relevant provision is reproduced below:

“Section 43. (Duty to supply on request):-

(1) Save as otherwise provided in this Act, every distribution licensee, shall, on an application by the owner or occupier of any premises, give supply of electricity to such premises, within one month after receipt of the application requiring such supply:

Provided that where such supply requires extension of distribution mains, or commissioning of new sub-stations, the distribution licensee shall supply the electricity to such premises immediately after such extension or commissioning or within such period as may be specified by the Appropriate Commission:

Provided further that in case of a village or hamlet or area wherein no provision for supply of electricity exists, the Appropriate Commission may extend the said period as it may consider necessary for electrification of such village or hamlet or area.

Explanation.-For the purposes of this sub-section, “application” means the application complete in all respects in the appropriate form, as required by the distribution licensee, along with documents showing payment of necessary charges and other compliances.

(2) It shall be the duty of every distribution licensee to provide, if required, electric plant or electric line for giving electric supply to the premises specified in sub-section (1):

Provided that no person shall be entitled to demand, or to continue to receive, from a licensee a supply of electricity for any premises having a separate supply unless he has agreed with the licensee to pay to him such price as determined by the Appropriate Commission.

(3) If a distribution licensee fails to supply the electricity within the period specified in sub-section (1), he shall be liable to a penalty which may extend to one thousand rupees for each day of default.”[emphasis added]

Accordingly, the Commission specified time period for release of connections to different category of consumers in regulation 8 of the PSERC (Electricity Supply Code & related matters) Regulations, 2014 and penalty if the distribution licensee fails to supply electricity to the applicant within the period specified in the Supply Code.

(ii) Grievance Settlement Mechanism:

To protect the rights of the consumers and to formalise the mechanism for redressal of grievances, Section 42 of the Electricity Act, 2003 provides, inter alia, for the establishment of a Consumer Grievances Redressal Forum (CGRF). It also provides for a channel of appeal in the form of Ombudsman for settling non-redressal of grievances by CGRF. The relevant provisions of the Act are reproduced below:

“Section 42. (Duties of distribution licensee and open access):

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- (5) Every distribution licensee shall, within six months from the appointed date or date of grant of licence, whichever is earlier, establish a forum for redressal of grievances of the consumers in accordance with the guidelines as may be specified by the State Commission.*
 - (6) Any consumer, who is aggrieved by non-redressal of his grievances under sub-section (5), may make a representation for the redressal of his grievance to an authority to be known as ombudsman to be appointed or designated by the State Commission.*
 - (7) The Ombudsman shall settle the grievance of the consumer within such time and in such manner as may be specified by the State Commission.”*
 - (8) The provisions of Sub-Sections (5),(6),(7) shall be without prejudice to right which the consumer may have apart from the rights conferred upon him by those Sub-Sections.*

Thus the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions have been mandated to specify the guidelines and procedures for resolution of consumers' grievances. Accordingly, the Commission framed (Forum & Ombudsman) Regulations to provide detailed framework and procedure to implement the provisions of the Act. For speedy resolution of consumer grievances at the local level, the Commission has also approved Consumer Complaint handling Procedure (CCHP) for settlement of grievances.

Although, the Act provides for special grievance resolution mechanism through CGRF and Ombudsman but Section 42 (8) saves the right of the consumer, which he/she may have under constitutional provisions of other law, for the time being in force, apart from the rights conferred under Electricity Act, 2003. Section 173 of the Act further provides that the Consumer Protection Act 1986 has an overriding effect in so far as provision of the Electricity Act or rule or regulation made there under is inconstant with any provision of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Section 173. (Inconsistency in laws):

Nothing contained in this Act or any rule or regulation made thereunder or any instrument having effect by virtue of this Act, rule or regulation shall have effect in so far as it is inconsistent with any other provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 or the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 or the Railways Act, 1989.

Further Section 175 of the Electricity Act, 2003 provides that the provisions of the Act are in addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time in force.

175. (Provisions of the Act to be in addition to and not in derogation of other laws).-

The provisions of this Act are in addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time being in force.

(iii) Minimum Standards of Performance & Compensation

The Act also provides that the Commission shall specify the performance standards and in case the licensee fails to meet these standards, he shall be liable to pay

compensation to the affected person as may be determined by the Commission. The relevant sections of the Act read as under;

“Section 57. (Consumer Protection: standards of performance of licensee):

(1) The Appropriate Commission may, after consultation with the licensees and persons likely to be affected, specify standards of performance of a licensee or a class of licensees.

(2) If a licensee fails to meet the standards specified under sub-section (1), without prejudice to any penalty which may be imposed or prosecution be initiated, he shall be liable to pay such compensation to the person affected as may be determined by the Appropriate Commission:

Provided that before determination of compensation, the concerned licensee shall be given a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

(3) The compensation determined under sub-section (2) shall be paid by the concerned licensee within ninety days of such determination.”

“Section 58. (Different standards of performance by licensee):

The Appropriate Commission may specify different standards under sub-section (1) of section 57 for a class or classes of licensee.”

“Section 59. (Information with respect to levels of performance): ---

(1) Every licensee shall, within the period specified by the Appropriate Commission, furnish to the Commission the following information, namely:-

(a) the level of performance achieved under sub-section (1) of the section 57;

(b) the number of cases in which compensation was made under sub-section (2) of section 57 and the aggregate amount of the compensation.

(2) *The Appropriate Commission shall at least once in every year arrange or the publication, in such form and manner as it considers appropriate, of such of the information furnished to it under sub-section (1)."*

Accordingly, the Commission specified minimum Standards of Performance in the Supply Code, 2014 along with compensation payable to the consumers in case of violation of these standards by the licensee (Appendix 1).

(iv) *The National Electricity Policy (NEP) & Tariff Policy*

These provisions of the Act have further been reinforced by National Electricity Policy (NEP) and the Tariff Policy framed under section 3 of the Act. The relevant provisions of NEP and Tariff Policy are as under:

Para 5.13 Protection of consumers' interests and quality standards

"5.13.1 Appropriate Commission should regulate utilities based on predetermined indices on quality of power supply. Parameters should include, amongst others, frequency and duration of interruption, voltage parameters, harmonics, transformer failure rates, waiting time for restoration of supply, percentage defective meters and waiting list of new connections. The Appropriate Commissions would specify expected standards of performance.

5.13.2 Reliability Index (RI) of supply of power to consumers should be indicated by the distribution licensee. A road map for declaration of RI for all cities and towns up to the District Headquarter towns as also for rural areas, should be drawn by up SERCs. The data of RI should be compiled and published by CEA.

5.13.3 It is advised that all State Commissions should formulate the guidelines regarding setting up of grievance redressal forum by the licensees as also the regulations regarding the ombudsman and also appoint/designate the ombudsman within six months.

5.13.4 The Central Government, the State Governments and Electricity Regulatory Commissions should facilitate capacity building of consumer groups and their

effective representation before the Regulatory Commissions. This will enhance the efficacy of regulatory process.”

Provisions in the Tariff Policy (TP)

“Para 8.0 - Supply of reliable and quality power of specified standards in an efficient manner and at reasonable rates is one of the main objectives of the National Electricity Policy. The State Commission should determine and notify the standards of performance of licensees with respect to quality, continuity and reliability of service for all consumers. It is desirable that the Forum of Regulators determines the basic framework on service standards. A suitable transition framework could be provided for the licensees to reach the desired levels of service as quickly as possible. Penalties may be imposed on licensees in accordance with section 57 of the Act for failure to meet the standards.”

2.0 Background of the assignment

Despite elaborate provisions in the Act and the regulations framed by the Commission to protect consumer interests, as stated above, the consumers of the State are by and large dis-satisfied with the grievance redressal system and quality of supply/services rendered by the licensee(s) of the State. The Commission received number of complaints from various Consumers/Industrial Associations from time to time regarding non redressal of their grievances by PSPCL in a time bound manner. The distribution utility has a key responsibility to ensure quality service to the consumers by resolving their grievances as per the time period specified in Standard of Performance (SoP). The Commission has the statutory duty to get the provisions of the Act implemented from the licensees and ensure quality supply to consumers.

In view of the above, the Commission vide order dated 27.12.2017 constituted a Committee comprising of the following to deliberate the issues relating to the consumers’ redressal mechanism and suggest measures to ensure speedy resolution of complaints.

- | | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 1) | Sh.Rajiv Bhatia, Secretary/PSERC | : Chairman |
| 2) | Ms Parneet Mahal Suri, Director/M&F | : Member |
| 3) | Er.H.S.Bedi, Joint Director/Regulations | : Convener |
| 4) | Chief Engineer/CGRF, PSPCL | : Member |
| 5) | Sr.Xen/ST-2 o/o Director/DS, PSPCL. | : Member |
| 6) | Addl.SE/Elecy. Call Centre, PSPCL, Ludhiana | : Member |
| 7) | Sr.Xen/DS Divn., PSPCL, Mohali. | : Member |
| 8) | Sh. K.K.Singla Advisor/Power,
PHD Chamber of Commerce & Ind. | : Member |
| 9) | Sh. D.L Sharma, Director/Vardhman Textiles Ltd.
Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) | : Member |

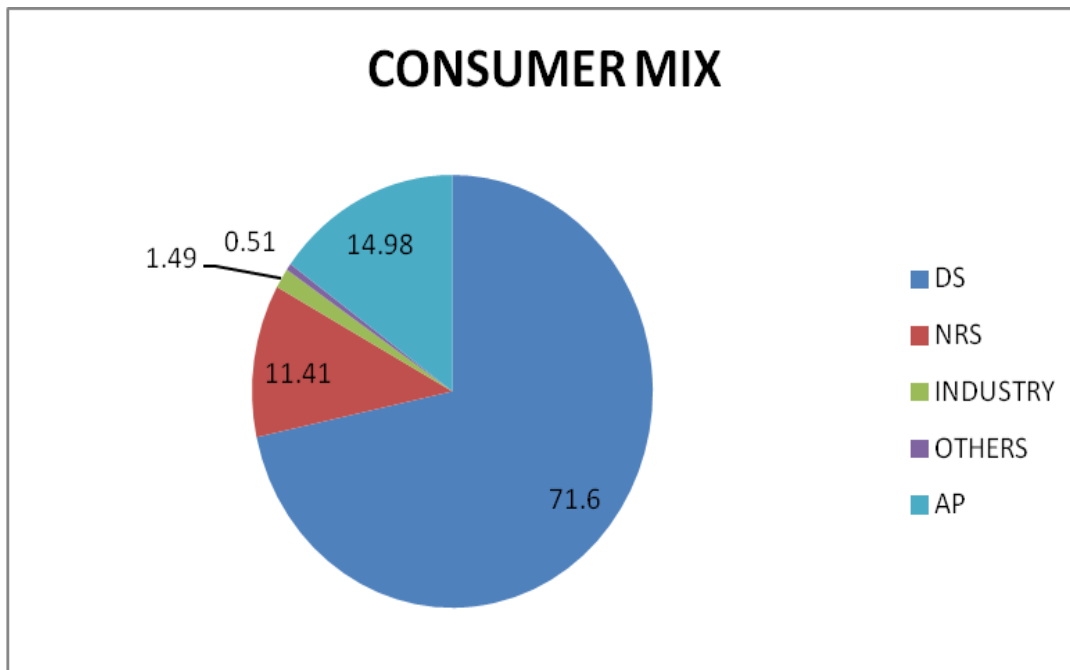
The Terms & Reference of the Committee are as under:

- i) To examine the system prevailing in PSPCL to resolve monetary/non monetary complaints such as no supply complaints etc and corrupt practices amongst officials/officers of the utility.
- ii) The responsibility centres for resolution of each type of complaint and the time period prescribed for resolution of the complaint.
- iii) Present system to monitor resolution of the complaints in PSPCL.
- iv) Recommendations to streamline the existing procedure/guidelines/regulations relating to Consumer Redressal Mechanism to ensure speedy resolution of complaints of the consumers.
- v) Measures to create public awareness regarding Grievance Redressal Mechanism.
- vi) Any other related matter with the permission of the Chair.

The Committee has been mandated to submit its interim report with respect to ToR from (i) to (iii) within four weeks and complete report within 8 weeks from the date of constitution of the Committee to the Commission.(Appendix 2).

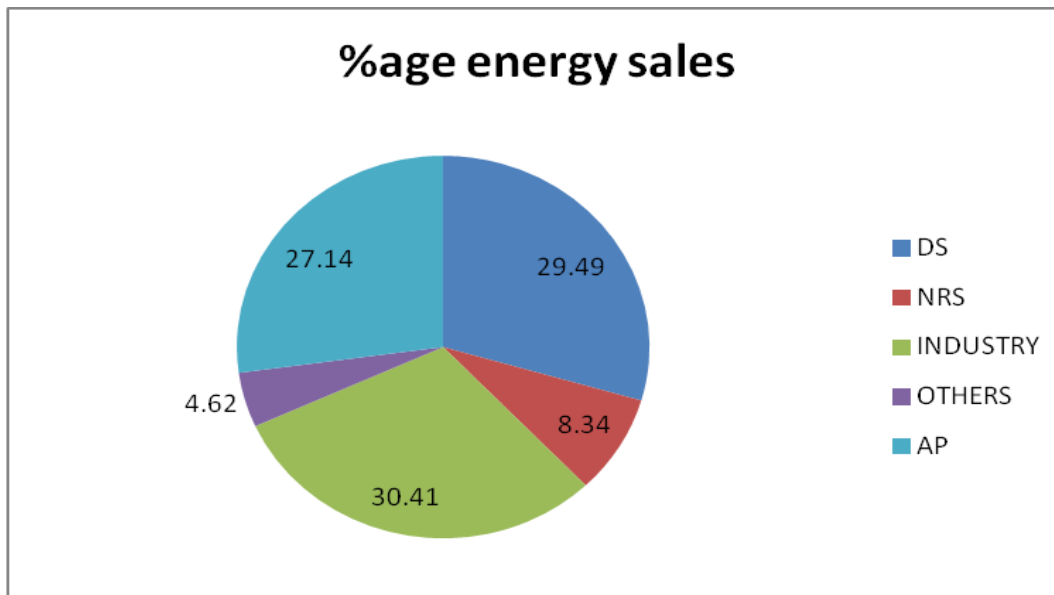
3.0 CONSUMER PROFILE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SET OF DISTRIBUTION WING OF PSPCL

PSPCL is the sole electricity distribution company for Punjab State and has over 90 Lac consumers. The consumers have been broadly categorised as Domestic Supply (DS), Non Residential Supply (NRS), Industrial Supply (further sub-categorised as Small, Medium & large Supply depending on load/demand), Agriculture (AP) and others. The composition of the different categories of consumers is as under:



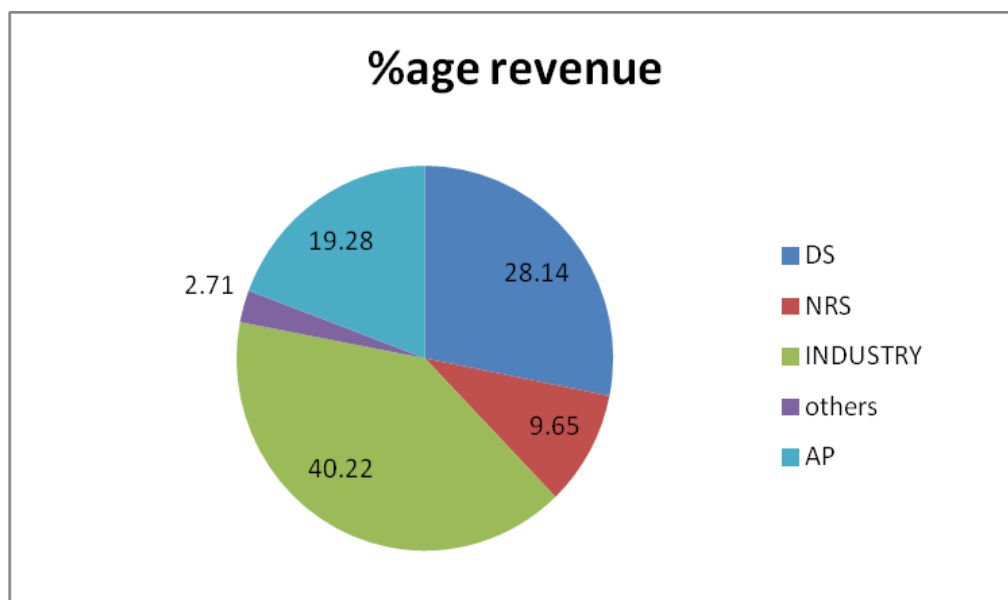
Description	DS	NRS	INDUSTRY	others	AP	Total
Number (in lac)	64.58	10.29	1.34	0.463	13.51	90.183
%age	71.61	11.41	1.49	0.51	14.98	100

Thus more than 72% (64.58 lac) are domestic consumers, followed by approximately 15% (13.5 lac) agricultural and 11.5% (10.3 lac) commercial consumers. Thus more than 83% are general consumers spread across the State and to provide quality service to these consumers is a real challenge for any distribution company. The power consumed by various categories of consumers is as under:



Description	DS	NRS	Industry	others	AP	Total
Energy Sales (MU)	13047.33	3688.47	13454.62	2044.65	12008.98	44244.05
%age	29.49	8.34	30.41	4.62	27.14	100

However, the revenue collection from different categories of consumers is not proportionate to their energy consumption. Although the industrial consumers are less than 1.5% (1.34 lac) but consumes more than 30% of the power and contribute more than 36% revenue to PSPCL. This is due to cross subsidisation



Category	DS	NRS	INDUSTRY	others	AP	Total
Revenue (₹ Cr).	7234.05	2481.74	10338.15	695.96	4957	25706.9
%age revenue	28.14	9.65	40.22	2.71	19.28	100.00

For administrative purposes, the State has been divided into five distribution zones headed by Chief Engineers and each zone has four or five distribution circles headed by Superintendent Engineers. There are approximately 100 plus divisions headed by Sr. XENs and 400 plus sub-divisions, which is the lowest rung of the administrative level of distribution setup. Approximately 9000 complaint staff, working in 24x7 shifts, attends to the supply related complaints of the consumers. During summer season the peak demand of electricity reaches its peak and so do supply related complaints. During this period, Paddy plantation also begins and demand from agricultural consumers is the maximum during this period.

Though the per capita consumption of Punjab (1466 units) is one of the highest in the country but is still very low as compared to developed countries. Reliable and uninterrupted power supply is necessary for improving quality of life particularly in rural areas. For industry, quality supply is not only essential for the industrial growth of the State but also for the financial health of the utility.

4.0 PRESENT SYSTEM OF COMPLAINT REGISTRATION, RESOLUTION AND MONITORING

The main category of complaints received from the consumers by the distribution licensee can be categorized as under:

- a) Complaints by the applicants regarding delay in release of new connections and/or levy of various charges.
- b) Supply related complaints which can broadly be sub-categorized as normal supply failure, major breakdown of the lines, damage of distribution transformers, voltage fluctuations and unscheduled power cuts.
- c) Complaints regarding wrong metering
- d) Billing Complaints.
- e) Deficiency in services
- f) Complaints against employees and officers.

A consumer can lodge complaint and approach the appropriate authority of PSPCL for redressal of his/her grievances. As per Forum and Ombudsman Regulations, a consumer includes the person applying for new connection and is thus

entitled to all the rights and privileges that are available to the consumers under consumer redressal system specified by the Commission. **“Consumer Grievance”** has been defined in the regulations as any complaint relating to any fault, imperfection, short coming, defect or deficiency in the quality, nature and manner of service or performance in pursuance of a licence, contract, agreement or under Electricity Supply Code or in relation to Standards of Performance specified by the Commission including payment of compensation or billing disputes of any nature or recovery of charges by the licensee and matters relating to the safety of the distribution system having potential of endangering the life or property.

The various options available to consumers for registration of complaints and procedure adopted by PSPCL to settle the complaints & monitoring of its resolution are as under:

a) **By directly approaching the Sub Divisional office or higher authorities**

The consumers generally approach the sub-divisional office for matters relating to release of new connections or to rectify some wrong bill or wrong metering or employee related complaints. Although, officers from PSPCL claimed that the complaints of such consumers are attended promptly by the staff and the officer in-charge but it is observed that there is no established procedure to register such complaints in the record of the sub-division and to monitor its disposal. There is no system to apprise the complainant of the status or disposal of his complaint so that he can take further remedial measures as per law. There is no monitoring of disposal of complaints received in the sub-division by the higher authority. Thus the effectiveness of the disposal of consumer complaints cannot be established.

b) **Through PSPCL’s Grievance Redressal Management System (GRMS)**

Consumers/complainants can register complaint from PSPCL website through Grievance Redressal Management System (GRMS) portal. The GRMS system was started in June 2011. The complainant can enter following details while registering the complaint:-

- Name (Optional)

- Contact No (Optional)
- Email Id (Optional)
- Complaint Detail (Mandatory)
- Attachment (Optional)

Upon registering the complaint, a registration number is intimated to the complainant and also sent through SMS if mobile number is provided by the complainant. This registration number can be used by the complainant to track the status of the complaint. The complainant also gets SMS when the complaint gets closed and the final status can be checked through the website.

GRMS Portal Login Ids of different users/offices of PSPCL, for processing/forwarding the complaint, are generated by O/o Dy. Secy./Grievance. All the complaints registered through PSPCL website are forwarded to the concerned office by O/o Dy. Secy./Grievance. Whenever the complaint is forwarded by any office/user, an SMS is also sent to the concerned officer. The resolution of complaints through GRMS is monitored by Dy. Secy/Grievances and there no regular monitoring of disposal of complaints by higher authorities.

GRMS is also being used by CGRF to dispose of Non-monetary complaints received by CGRF office or those forwarded to CGRF by the Commission. These complaints are also uploaded on Grievance Redressal Management System (GRMS) portal of PSPCL. These uploaded complaints are then sent to the concerned Chief Engineer/Distribution with a message to intimate the complaint's redressal to the concerned complainant. These complaints are then forwarded to the concerned SE's, then to concerned Xen's for redressal (end point). There is a provision of sending system generated SMS's to the concerned officers for redressal of the complaints at regular intervals. These complaints are then got redressed by the concerned field officers and report is uploaded on the GRMS. This report is then sent back to the CE/Operation concerned through GRMS portal. If concerned operation officer is satisfied with the report, then the report is sent to the CGRF Admin link for closing.

Similarly, if CGRF is satisfied with the report received from operation office, then it is closed otherwise it may be reverted back to the same operation office or any other appropriate office.

c) By lodging complaint on 1912 number.

For efficient and fast fault resolution mechanism, an online system was rolled by PSPCL in 2014 for scalability, resource optimisation, better registration, monitoring and reporting regarding consumer complaints. Primary objective of the project is to provide an efficient system to facilitate consumers in registration and quickest possible efficient resolution of electricity supply related problems and to create a mechanism for efficient real time and effective monitoring.

Other objectives are:

- ❖ To record all complaints
- ❖ To ensure timely resolution of complaints
- ❖ To inform the consumer of progress of their complaint.
- ❖ To provide mechanism to consumers to escalate and to provide feedback.
- ❖ To take feedback to improve complaint handling and to resolve consumer issues.
- ❖ To keep actionable information available to all stakeholders.
- ❖ Utilise in-house IT team in operations and deployment to keep IT implementation cost low.

A 40 seater **Electricity Call Centre (ECC) at Ludhiana has been set up which is** manned 24x7 in three shifts by an outsourced agency. It receives calls related to following categories of complaints:

- Supply complaints
- Billing Related Complaints
- Infrastructure Related Problems
- Information regarding theft of electricity
- Accidents and Emergencies

In this system, customers have been provided with a single number **1912** for complaint registration. Consumer calls or sends an SMS to 1912 to register complaint. It has been successfully rolled out all over Punjab to cover 98 no divisions serving about 90 lac consumers. 100% complaints are now being registered, monitored through the new system. The Agents at ECC receive calls from all over Punjab and register complaints in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. In case consumer has ever called in past, their details are auto populated. Each consumer is assigned a unique registration number and registration is confirmed via SMS to consumer's mobile. The registered complaint is automatically transferred to Nodal Complaint Centre (NCC) catering to the consumers of a particular area. There are 104 Nodal Complaint Centres manned by 4 to 6 persons in shifts. Their job is to assign customer complaints, received from ECC Ludhiana, to complaint handling gangs and ensure timely resolution of complaints. If required they may call customers to confirm their address or to take feedback regarding complaint. They also enter information regarding feeder outages/ feeder wise scheduled and unscheduled power cuts in the CRM software. This information is immediately visible at ECC so that consumers calling from same areas may be informed of the outage and possible resolution times.

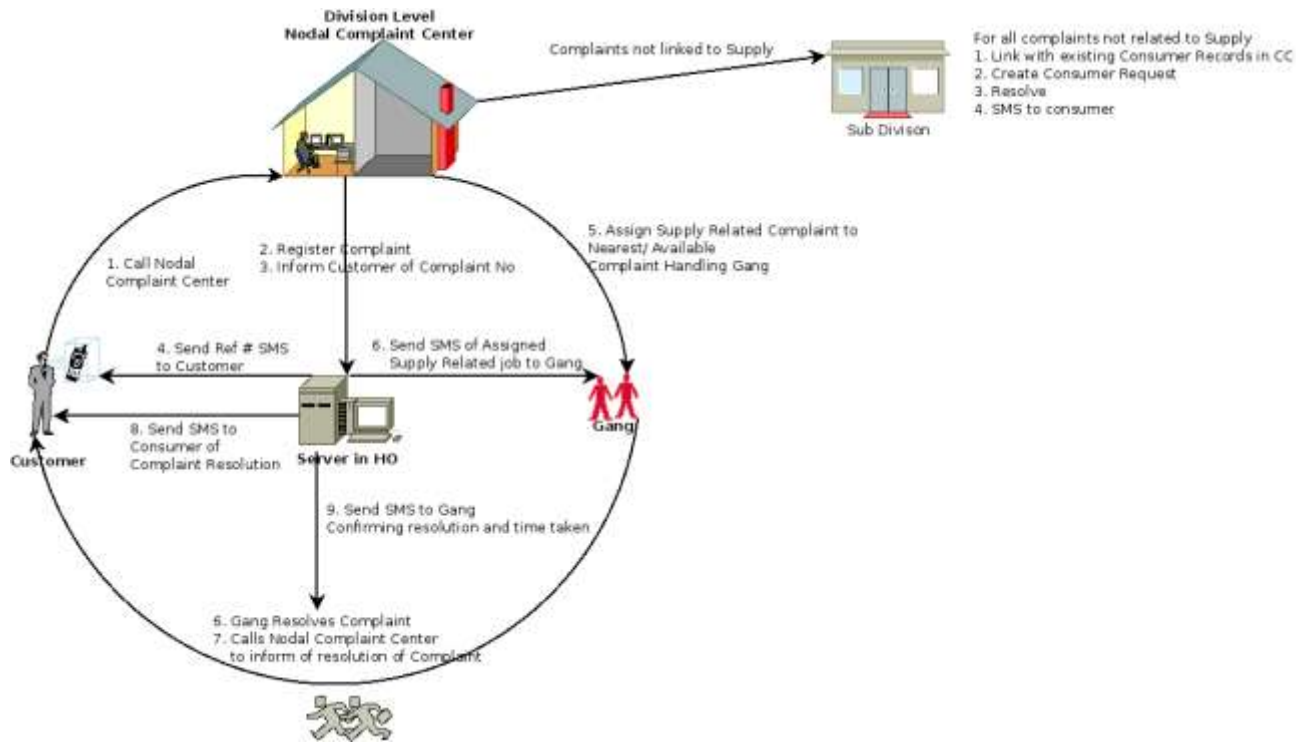
On an average about 8000 complaints per day are registered which sometimes goes upto 40,000 in a day during peak months. The Call Centre handles 60 simultaneous calls and beyond this, the calls are forwarded to 104 number Nodal Complaint Centres.

The Nodal Complaint Centre assigns the complaint to one of the available complaint handling staff. The staff is informed via SMS regarding new job. Consumer is also informed of the assignment of job to complaint handling staff. Mobile number of complaint staff is sent to consumer via SMS. Once the complaint staff has resolved the complaint they call the nodal complaint centre and get the complaint closed on system. Consumer is informed of the same via SMS again.

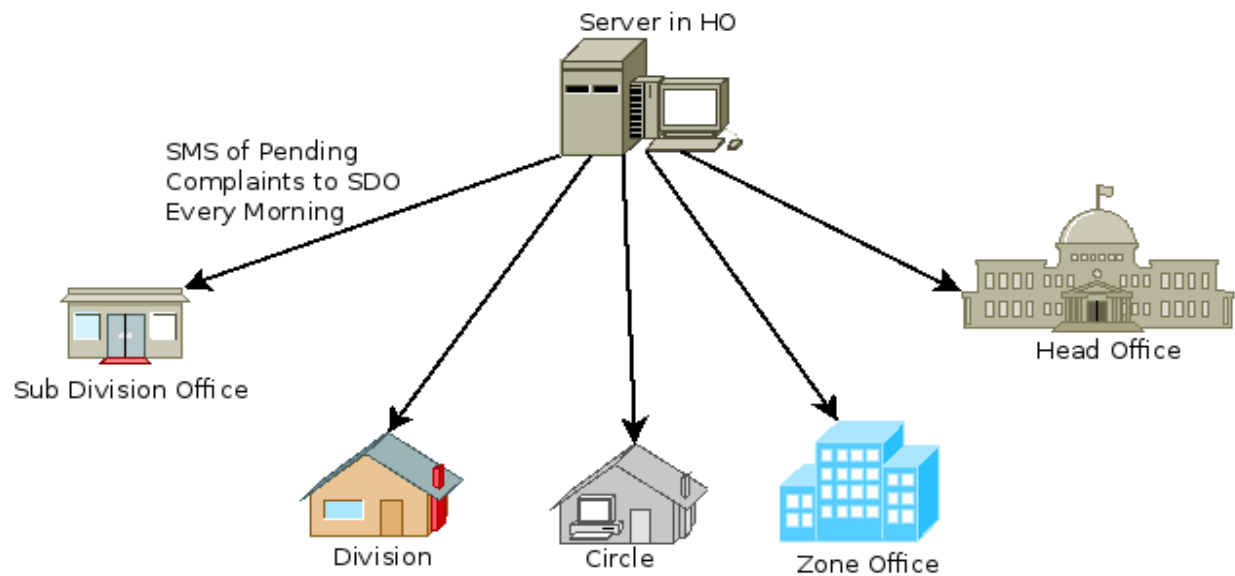
On closure of complaint, feedback is taken from consumers by third party. Incorrectly closed complaints are reopened by third party. Consumer also has the option to automatically re-open incorrectly closed complaints by sending SMS to

1912 computerised mobile numbers. This number analyzes the consumer SMS and classifies the SMS as negative, neutral or positive using artificial intelligence techniques. In case of negative reply from consumer, complaint is automatically reopened and escalated by the computer system.

Complaint Resolution Process



4. Reporting



Reporting of Complaints through Existing Logins in Online Returns

1. Reporting by types of Complaints
2. List of all Pending/ Resolved Complaints
3. Pending/ Resolved by S/D, Division, Circle, Zone

Advantages of 1912 System vis-vis old system

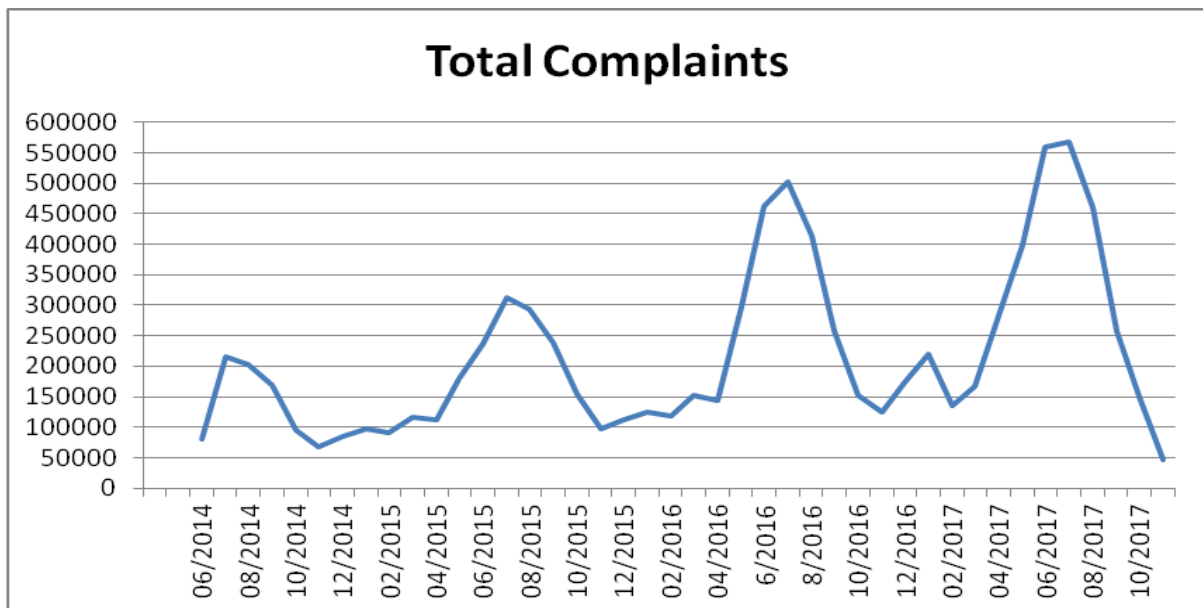
- Increased consumer satisfaction, they can register complaint from their phone and are continuously appraised of the progress of resolution.
- Complaint staff is assigned new jobs via SMS. They need not return to complaint centres for new jobs.
- Real time information regarding efficiency of Complaint Registration; is available to field officers, monitoring cells, management and Punjab Govt via mobile application.
- Can measure the effectiveness of Call Centre agents and also complaint handling staff for efficient registration and disposal of complaints.
- Can handle more than 400 concurrent users
- Considerable cost saving in terms of software costing and licensing due to use of in-house expertise.
- Integrated with technical data of 400 plus subdivisions for analysis regarding feeders, localities and distribution transformer wise faults.

The Consumers can also use PSPCL Mobile App “Bijli Sewa” to register complaints and can reach PSPCL through social media i.e twitter, FaceBook etc. too.

Effectiveness of complaint registration at 1912

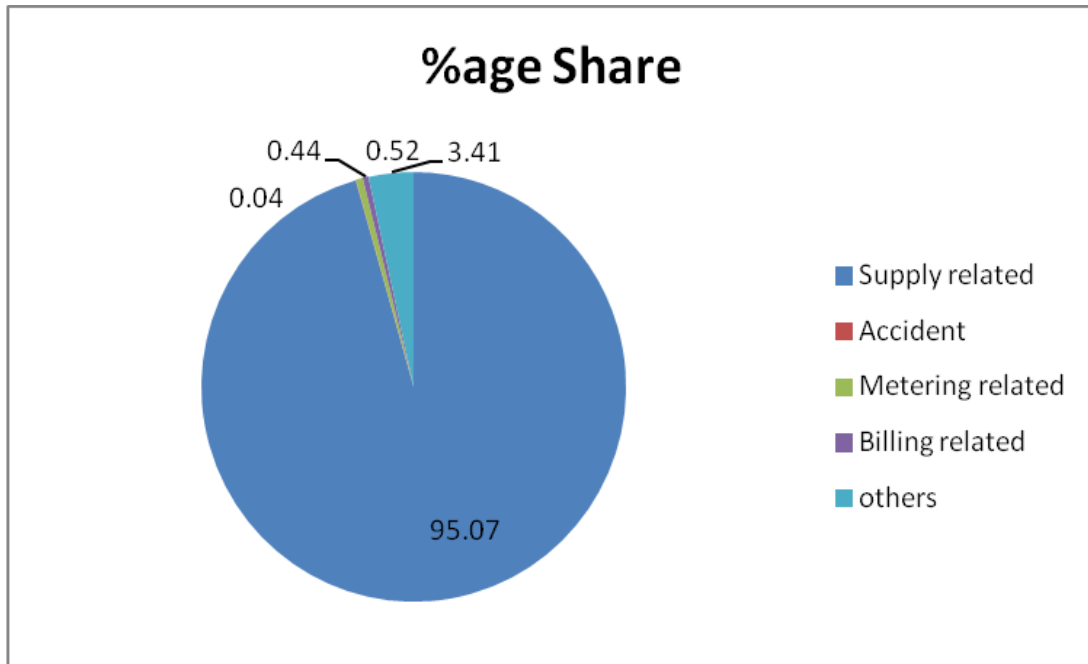
From the scrutiny of the data submitted by PSPCL from May 2014 to November 2017 (Appendix 3), it is evident that registration of complaints at 1912 is increasing and more and more consumers are using 1912 facility to lodge complaints.

During FY 2014-15, the total number of complaints registered at 1912 were 12.18 lac, during FY 2015-16, the number was 21.30 lac which increased to 30.51 lac during FY 2016-17. In the first eight months of the current year, total of 27.22 lac complaints have been registered at 1912. Now no supply related complaints are lodged at the complaint centres of PSPCL. The month wise trend of complaint registration has been indicated in the following graph:

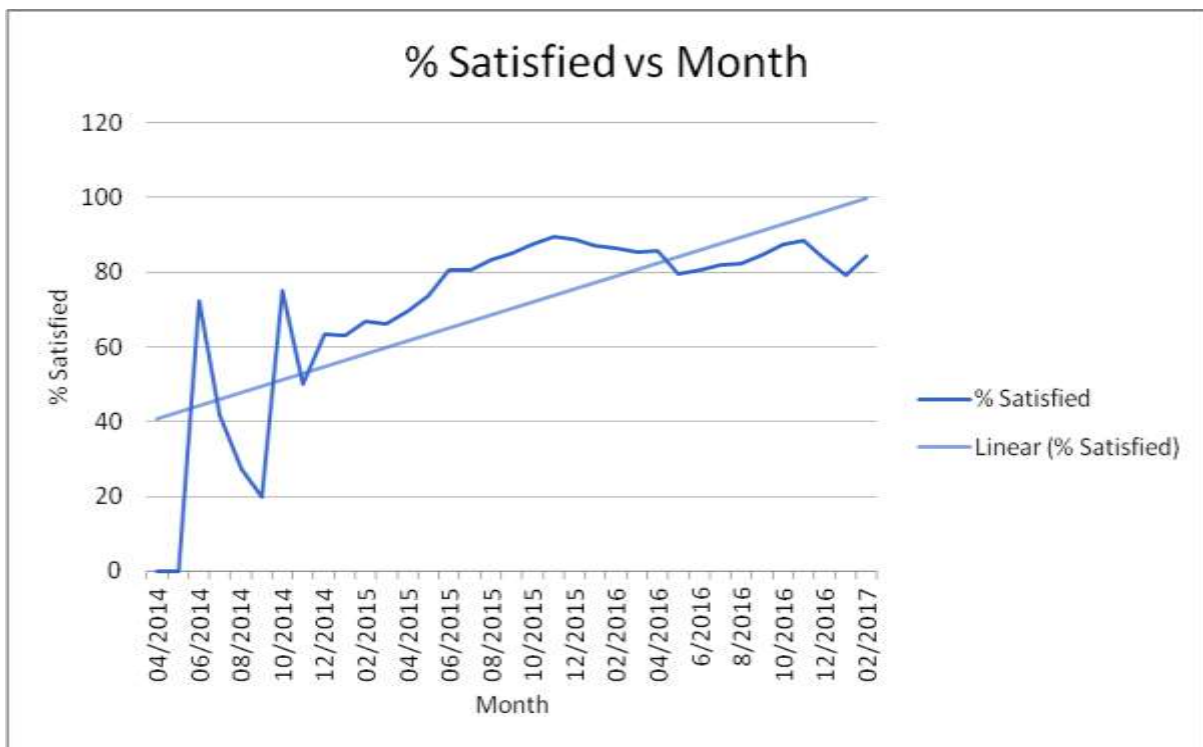


It has been observed that more than 95% of the complaints received at 1912, are relating to supply, whereas the metering related and the billing complaints are 0.52% and 0.44% respectively which clearly shows that 1912 is mainly used by the consumers to lodge electricity related complaints. Further analysis of the supply related complaints, reveals that about 65% are normal fuse off call complaints, 3.68% are regarding transformer failure and 4.15% regarding voltage fluctuations. The

power outage complaints comprises both of schedule and unscheduled power outages are 21.6%



PSPCL claimed that the satisfaction level of the consumers regarding resolution of their complaints, which was around 60 to 70 % in the initial months has now touched 88%.



However, the third party feedback has ceased to work w.e.f March 2017.

5.0 BILL RELATED COMPLAINTS

The billing of consumers in the State can be divided in to two groups. One set of consumers are covered under SAP system of billing and remaining consumers are covered under Non-SAP system of billing.

Billing procedure under SAP System

SAP billing and Customer care system has been implemented in 47 no towns (140 no subdivns) covered under R-APDRP (Part-A). SAP servers are situated in Patiala at PSPCL Head Office's Data centre, and field offices are connected as Client system through Virtual Private Network (VPN). About 45 lakh consumers are covered in SAP system.

The billing of general category consumers with load upto 10 kW is carried out bimonthly through Spot Billing Machines (SBMs). The billing of general consumers with load exceeding 10kW and up to 20 kW is carried out monthly. SBMs are GPRS enabled so consumers can pay their bill as soon as the bill is delivered to consumers by meter reader. SBM data is immediately transferred to central server.

Meter reading of General consumers with load from 20 kW to 100 kW, Small Power (SP) and Medium Supply (MS) consumers is taken monthly through SBM (Spot Billing Machine). However, bills are prepared from SAP servers and delivered manually to consumers through bill distributor.

The consumers with load above 100 kW are covered under Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) where meter reading and load survey from the consumers meter is available through GPRS based modem installed. PSPCL officers need not to visit consumers' meters for meter reading. In case meter reading of any consumer is not available through AMR system, timely information for the same is sent to field offices for manual reading.

The field offices are connected to SAP server through VPN and service request by field offices viz bill correction, Sundry posting, new connection, disconnection, Change of load, change of category, shifting of connection etc. is on real time basis in SAP. Various reports for differnt modules viz. Billing, Metering,

Customer Service, Collection, Energy Audit, ARR etc. are available under the reporting platform of SAP known as Business Intelligence (BI) portal which are available in graphical form to the management. Apart from BI portal, several other reports as required by field staff for their day-to-day reporting are available in SAP.

Billing Procedure under Non-SAP

At Sub Division level, the advices, spot reading files, meter reading blanks, master files etc. are prepared as per schedule given and the same are sent to Computer Service Centre (CSS). The data of all the subdivision falling under it is sent to National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) for final processing. NIELIT generate checking list of all the data and send it to Clearing Cell under Sr. XEN/Computer Cell for checking. After checking is finalised, the Ledger and Bills are generated.

Billing dispute resolution procedure

In case, the consumer is not satisfied with the bill rendered to him, he can approach the sub-division office. The concerned sub-divisional officer can rectify the bill, in case some error is apparent in the bill. In case of dispute, the consumer can approach Dispute Settlement Committee (DSC) or CGRF by depositing 20% of the disputed amount for resolution of the dispute. The DSCs function as per Consumer Complaint Handling Procedure (CCHP) approved by the Commission. The Divisional Level Committee headed by Sr. XEN handles the dispute cases up to ₹ 20000/-, the Circle level Committee headed by SE settles disputes exceeding ₹ 20000/- and up to ₹ 1,00,000/- and Zonal Level Committee headed by CE take up cases exceeding ₹ 1 lac and up to ₹ 2 lac. DSCs are expected to resolve the complaint in 90 days. All cases exceeding ₹ 2 lac shall go to CGRF. The resolution of the disputes by DSCs is monitored by the PSPCL management through the quarterly Management Information Report (MIR). The consumer can file appeal against the decision of DSC with CGRF or can approach the CGRF directly without first approaching DSC. The CGRF is required to resolve the complaint in 45 days. The appeal against the decision of CGRF lies with Ombudsman. The Ombudsman settles the grievance of the consumer within 60 days. The Commission reviews the performance of CGRF and the Ombudsman.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(A) KEY AREAS OF CONCERN

During the study of the current grievance redressal framework of PSPCL, the committee identified following areas of concern which need to be addressed to mitigate the hardship of the consumers in getting their grievances resolved in an expeditious manner:

(I) COMPLAINT REGISTRATION

For registration of complaint, the consumers of PSPCL have multiple options viz they may approach the sub-divisional office directly or lodge their non-monetary complaint on Grievance Redressal Management System (GRMS) portal on PSPCL's website or call 1912 helpline number. As far as registration of complaint at the sub-division level is concerned, the consumers generally prefer to approach the sub-divisional office for redressal of their other than supply related complaints. However, the committee observed that there is neither any laid down procedure for registration of complaints in the sub-divisional office nor any system to monitor its disposal. The complaints lodged on the GRMS portal are forwarded to the concerned offices and the consumer can track its status on PSPCL's website. CGRF also registers the non-monetary complaints received in his office at GRMS portal, for disposal by the concerned office. However it has been observed that disposal is not that quick and also very few consumers directly use this portal. The 1912 helpline number is the most convenient mode of registration of complaints however consumers are using it mostly to register supply related complaints. Analysis of the complaints registered at 1912 reveals that 95% complaints are supply related and only less than 1% are bill related. The 1912 system is far better managed with inbuilt monitoring features.

(II) BILLING COMPLAINTS

Whereas consumers are concerned, the most neglected area of service rendered by PSPCL is the resolution of bill related complaints where consumers are facing lot of inconvenience and hardship. The main grievances of the consumers are

- (a) The bill format is not consumer friendly since it is very difficult for an ordinary consumer to understand various components of the bill. The problem is more acute in case of spot bills.
- (b) The sundry and the arrear amount is included in the current energy bill without providing any details. The local offices are also not in a position to satisfy the consumers, who are asked to approach other offices.
- (c) The consumers are generally forced to deposit the faulty bill to avoid surcharge and/or disconnection since bill related complaints are not disposed of in a timely manner.
- (d) There is no nodal officer to attend to the high end consumers who are asked to approach CBC office at Ludhiana or IT office at Patiala for their bill related queries/grievances.

(III) RELIABILITY OF SUPPLY

Although in the past few years, PSPCL has invested large amount of funds received from various centrally sponsored schemes however, the reliability of supply is far from satisfactory. The large industrial consumers fed at 66 kV or 220 kV are particularly aggrieved since they have invested huge funds to erect higher voltage infrastructure to ensure uninterrupted power supply but they are not satisfied with the reliability of supply. In this regard, following issues came up during the discussions:

- (a) The interruptions on transmission lines are more in foggy conditions.
- (b) The interruptions on 66 kV and sometimes on 220kV lines are sometimes due to fault at the lower voltage distribution system which should have been cleared at that level.

(c) The restoration time is very high due to non-availability of trained staff at the local level.

(d) The concept of regular maintenance or preventive maintenance of distribution network and particularly that of the LT system is conspicuous by its absence. The Staff is generally busy in complaint handling and in restoring the supply.

(IV) RESOLUTION MECHANISM

In Punjab, there is a three tier system of complaint resolution. The first level is through Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs) at Divisional/Circle/Zonal levels, the second level is Consumer Grievances Redressal Forum (CGRF) and third is the appellate level of Ombudsman. Consumers have the option to approach DSCs or CGRF for redressal of their complaints. It has been observed that more and more consumers prefer CGRF as compared to DSCs. However, since presently there is only one CGRF at Patiala therefore, consumers sometimes approach DSCs for speedy resolution of their complaints. Secondly, the CGRF generally adjudicates monetary complaints whereas non-monetary complaints are forwarded to PSPCL for resolution through GRMS portal. As per the Forum and Ombudsman Regulations, all the monetary as well as non-monetary complaints for any deficiency in service by the distribution licensee come within the purview of CGRF. Before the 5th amendments to the Forum & Ombudsman Regulations notified on 22.11.2013, CGRF was a appellate authority hearing appeals against decisions of DSCs but after amendments in the regulations, the CGRF now has the powers to settle all monetary and non-monetary complaints referred to it directly except those related to theft of energy/UUE cases.

(V) SHORTAGE OF MANPOWER

It has generally been reported both by the officers of PSPCL and the consumers that there is an acute shortage of trained manpower at the local level resulting in poor consumer service. PSEB (now PSPCL) had

been considered as an overstaffed organisation with almost one lac employees strength in 1990s. In order to reduce manpower, PSPCL stopped all new recruitments for many years and relied on retirements to reduce its number of employees. The same should have been followed by systematic re-training and re-deployment of staff but the same could not be achieved due to various administrative and social reasons. The policy resulted in increase in the average age of PSPCL manpower and accordingly many field jobs suffered resulting in poor consumer service. There are certain areas of PSPCL's operation from where staff can be shifted to other areas of work but the same will require re-training and re-deployment of the manpower.

(VI) LACK OF PUBLIC AWARENESS

Another area of concern is that there is lack of awareness amongst consumers about their rights and the remedies available to them for redressal of their grievances. The Standards of Performance (SoP) specified in the Supply Code Regulations provides time limits for various services and also compensation payable to the consumer for non-compliance by the staff of the distribution licensee. However, not a single case of compensation has been reported to the Commission. PSPCL has taken many pro-consumer measures particularly introduction of Information Technology but the public is still not aware of many of these services.

(B) WAY FORWARD

After deliberations and interaction with representatives of industry, the Committee makes the following recommendations:-

1. The 1912 system should be declared as a single touch point for recording/reporting of all service requests (not just complaints) raised by the consumers. To achieve the goal, following steps may be taken by the distribution licensee:

- i) Whenever a consumer visits the subdivision for new connection, his request should be recorded in 1912. The status of that connection should be updated regularly on 1912. Whenever the connection is released, the same should be posted on 1912. Time taken for release of connections should be monitored at various levels.
 - ii) Similar procedure may also be adopted for all service requests received from the consumers e.g. Load Enhancement, Change of Name, MCO, Meter Challenge, Bill Correction or any deficiency in service.
 - iii) In case a consumer calls 1912 or uses PSPCL mobile app to inquire about progress of his service requests, upto date status should be provided to the consumer.
 - iv) Regular analysis of the average time taken to complete service requests should be undertaken and necessary corrective steps may be initiated by the management.
 - v) Practice of obtaining third party feedback system should be restored immediately and should be made mandatory for all types of service requests.
 - vi) There should be a monthly review of the resolution of consumer grievances vis-a-vis time frame specified for its resolution at the corporate level.
2. Different monitoring levels for different types of complaints viz supply related, release of connection, billing and deficiency in service etc may be notified by PSPCL and it should be made public, with contact details of the officers responsible for resolution of complaints/ grievances of the consumers.
 3. The resolution of billing related grievances of the consumers particularly at high-end consumers needs immediate attention of the utility. Although it has been specified in the Supply Code Regulations that all sundry charges or arrears of bills shall not be clubbed in the current energy bill and a separate notice giving detailed calculations is required to be issued to the consumer, however, it is seen that the same is still not being followed in PSPCL. The Commission may initiate action under section 142 of the Act against delinquent

officials. To address the bill related complaints of the consumers, following steps may be initiated:

- i) The billing formats may be revised to contain all relevant information for the convenience of the consumers. The spot bills may be delivered along with a printed leaflet annexed providing all details viz tariff rates, detail of other charges, amount of Security (consumption) etc which are part of the regular bill format.
 - ii) PSPCL should appoint Nodal Officers at Circle level to monitor and to resolve the bill related issues of the consumers.
 - iii) For consumers with load more than 100 kW, Sr.Xen/CBC of the concerned area may be appointed as Nodal Officer. Consumers should be able to lodge their complaints through e-mail to which response will be given by reverting back within 24 hours. It shall be the responsibility of the Nodal Officer to contact the concerned office of PSPCL to get the issue resolved and the consumer will not be asked to approach any other agency of the licensee. However, the distribution officers shall be equally responsible to provide all documents/information to the Nodal Officer within stipulated time.
 - iv) In-house training of the employees/ officers dealing with billing should be conducted at regular intervals.
 - v) All energy bills with load more than 100 kW shall be delivered only through e-mail to the consumers on their registered e-mails followed by SMS regarding delivery of the bills, amount payable and the last date for the payment.
4. During a particular MYT Control Period, structural changes in the tariff which require changes in the billing software may be avoided as far as possible and sufficient time should be given to the utility and the consumers to adopt the changes in the tariff structure.
 5. The consumers prefer to approach CGRF for redressal of their grievances rather than approaching Dispute Settlement Committees. Thus the decision of

the Commission to set up multiple CGRF is a welcome step in this direction but at the same time, the financial powers of the Dispute Settlement Committees may preferably be restored or atleast be doubled so that small consumers get their grievances resolved at the local level in an expeditious manner.

6. The website of the PSPCL is not user-friendly, from the point of view of a consumer. A separate consumer services portal/page may be created where all copies of formats used to avail various services, the charges payable by the applicant/consumer and the rights and obligations of consumers with all relevant rules and regulations should be made available in an easy to use and easily viewable format. Further, on the same page, it should be clearly mentioned as to which authority/ organisation a consumer can approach along with contact details of that authority for a particular grievance or inquiry. PSPCL call centre numbers and mobile app links should also be provided on that page. There should be a 'Frequently asked Question' link which provides all information to the consumers regarding frequently raised queries relating to PSPCL procedures and its rules/regulations.
7. To create awareness amongst consumers, PSPCL should use electronic media, social media and all other means to reach out to the consumers. The licensee must start a campaign to register the mobile phone number and e-mails of its consumers. PSPCL should regularly hold a 'Consumer grievances resolution week' in every quarter of the year at divisional/circle level where grievances of the consumers should be redressed promptly by the senior officers.
8. Last but not the least, the shortage of manpower in the field needs to be addressed by the utility by first resorting to re-training, right- sizing and re-deployment of existing manpower and also by engaging manpower through outsourcing as and where required. Need based recruitments may be made at supervisory and other critical levels.

APPENDIX 1

STANDARD OF PERFORMANCE AND COMPENSATION IN CASE OF VIOLATION					
Ref. No.	Complaint classification	Standard	Compensation payable for each block of delay for violation of standard		Designated functionary to deliver the service
			Compensation payable to individual consumer if the event affects a single consumer	Compensation payable to each consumer if the event affects more than one consumer	
1.1	Normal fuse off call/complaint				
(a)	Cities and towns/urban areas	Within 4 hours	Rs.100/- in each block of 2/4 hrs	Rs.50/- in each block of 2/4 hrs	Concerned Lineman
(b)	Rural areas	Within 8 hours			
1.2	Overhead Line breakdowns				
	LT Line				
(a)	Cities and towns/urban areas	Within 8 hours	Rs.100/- in each block of 4/6 hrs	Rs.50/- in each block of 4/6 hrs	JE/Incharge of area
(b)	Rural areas	Within 12 hours			
	HT mixed feeder				
(c)	Cities and towns/urban areas	Within 8 hours	Rs. 200/- in each block of 4/6 hrs.	Rs. 100/- in each block of 4/6 hrs.	JE/Incharge of area
(d)	Rural areas	Within 12 hours			
(e)	HT Cat. II, III & IV feeder	Within 6 hours	Rs. 2000/- in each block of 3 hrs.	Rs. 1000/- in each block of 3 hrs.	
	EHT Line				
(f)	Normal fault such as Disc Insulator failure	Within 12 hours	Rs.1000/- in each block of 6/12 hrs	Rs.500/- in each block of 6/12 hrs	AE/AEE incharge of the Line
(g)	Major fault such as Conductor Breakdown	Within 24 hours			
	EHT Line feeding not more than 2 consumers or cluster S/S				
(h)	Normal fault such as Disc Insulator failure	Within 8 hours	Rs. 2000/-in each block of 4/8 hrs.	Rs. 1000/-in each block of 4/8 hrs.	AE/AEE incharge of the Line
(i)	Major fault such as Conductor Breakdown	Within 16 hours			
	Breakdowns including breakage of poles				
(j)	Cities and towns/urban areas	Within 12 hours	Rs.100/- in each block of 6/12 hrs	Rs.50/- in each block of 6/12 hrs	JE/Incharge of area
(k)	Rural areas	Within 24 hours			
1.3	Underground cable breakdowns				

	Cities, towns/urban and rural areas	Within 24 hours	Rs.100/- in each block of 12 hrs	Rs.50/- in each block of 12 hrs	JE/Incharge of area
1.4	Distribution Transformer failure				
(a)	Cities and towns/urban areas	Within 24 hours	Rs.200/- in each block of 12/24 hrs	Rs.100/- in each block of 12/24 hrs	JE/Incharge of area
(b)	Rural areas	Within 48 hours			
1.5	Power Transformer failure (with primary voltage upto 66000 volts)	Within 15 days	Rs. 2000/- for each day of default	Rs. 1000/-for each day of default	Sr.Xen/Grid const.
1.6	Street Light Faults	i) Rectification of line faults within 4 hours ii) Replacement of defective units within 24 hours	Rs.200/- for each day of default	-	JE/Incharge of area
1.9	Period of Scheduled Outage				
(a)	Maximum duration in a single stretch	Not to exceed 6 hours in a day during the months from Apr to Oct & 8 hrs in a day during the months from Nov to March	Rs.200/- in each case of default	Rs.100/- in each case of default	JE/Incharge of area
(b)	Restoration of supply	By not later than 6.00 PM			
2.1	Voltage fluctuations				
(a)	Due to loose joint	Within 4 hours	Rs. 200 for each block of 2 hrs.	Rs. 100/- for each block of 2 hrs	JE Incharge of area
(b)	No expansion/enhancement of network involved	Within 2 working days	Rs.200/- for each day of default	Rs.100 /- for each day of default	JE/Incharge of area
(c)	Up gradation of distribution system required	Within 30 days	Rs.500/- for each day of default	Rs.250/- for each day of default	AE/AEE Incharge of area/ function
3.	Meter complaints				
3.1	Inspection and replacement of slow, fast/creeping, stuck up meters	Inspection within 7 working days and replacement within 10 working days of receipt of complaint	Rs.200/- for each day of default	Not applicable	JE/Incharge of area
3.2	Replacement of burnt meters	Within 5 working days	Rs.300/- for each day of default	Not applicable	JE/Incharge of area
4.	Release of new connection/additional load/demand feasible from existing network				
(a)	Release of supply	Within 7 days for DS/NRS Within 15 days for other than DS/NRS	Rs.200/- for each day of default	Not applicable	AE/AEE Incharge of area/ function

Network expansion/enhancement required to release supply					
(b)	Release of supply – Low Tension	Within 30 days	Rs.400/- for each day of default	Not applicable	AE/AEE Incharge of area/ function
(c)	Release of supply – High Tension 11000 volts	Within 45 days	Rs.2000/- for each day of default		
(d)	Release of supply - High Tension 33000 volts	Within 75 days			
(e)	Release of supply – Extra High Tension	Within 90 days			
(f)	Erection of substation required for release of supply	Within the time period approved by the Commission	Rs.2000/-for each day of default		
5. Transfer of title and conversion of services					
(a)	Transfer of title and/or change of category	Within 7 working days in case of LT consumer and 14 days in case of HT/EHT consumers	Rs.1000/- for each day of default	Not applicable	AE/AEE Incharge of area/ function
(b)	Conversion from LT single phase to LT three phase or vice versa	Within 30 days	Rs.200/- for each day of default		
6. Shifting of Meter/Service Connection & other services					
(a)	Shifting of Meter within premises	Within 3 working days	Rs.200/- for each day of default	Not applicable	AE/AEE Incharge of area/ function
(b)	Shifting of Service Connection LT Connection HT Connection	10 working days 20 days			
(c)	Shifting of LT/HT lines upto 11 kV	Within 20 days			
(d)	Shifting of HT lines above 11 kV	Within 30 days			
(e)	Shifting of distribution Transformer	Within 30 days			
7. Complaints about Consumer's Bills & restoration of supply					
(a)	Resolution of complaints on disputed electricity bill	(i) within 24 hrs if no additional information is required (ii) Within 7 working days if additional information is required	Rs.200/- for each day of default	Not applicable	ARA/RA
(b)	Reconnection of supply following disconnection due to non-payment of bills	Within 24 hours	Rs.400/- for each day of default	Not applicable	JE Incharge of area

**PUNJAB STATE ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
SCO 220-221, SECTOR-34 A CHANDIGARH**

OFFICE ORDER NO. 237/PSERC/

DATED: 27.10.2017

Subject:- Constitution of a Committee to examine the issues regarding resolution of Consumer Complaints

In view of the large number of complaints received from various consumers regarding non-redressal of their grievances and at the same time registration of very few complaints by DSCs/CGRF particularly that of West Zone of PSPCL, the Commission decides to constitute a Committee comprising of the following to deliberate the issues relating to Consumer Grievance Redressal Mechanism and suggest measures to ensure speedy resolution of complaints:

- 1) Sh.Rajiv Bhatia, Secretary/PSERC : Chairman
- 2) Ms Parneet Mahal Suri, Director/M&F, PSERC : Member
- 3) Er.H.S.Bedi, Joint Director/Regulations, PSERC :Member (Convener)
- 4) Chief Engineer/CGRF, PSPCL, Patiala : Member
- 5) Sr.Xen/ST-2 o/o Director/Distribution, PSPCL, Patiala : Member
- 6) Addl.SE/Electricity Call Centre, Janta Nagar Divn., : Member
PSPCL, Ludhiana
- 7) Sr.Xen/DS Divn., PSPCL, Mohali. : Member
- 8) Sh. K.K Singla Advisor/Power, : Member
PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry,
- 9) Sh. D.L.Sharma, Director/Vardhman Textiles Ltd. : Member
Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Committee are as under:

- i. To examine the system prevailing in PSPCL to resolve monetary complaints, non- monetary complaints such as ‘no supply complaints’/deficiency in service etc and employees’ related complaints.
- ii. The responsibility of different officials/officers to redress the grievance and the time period prescribed for resolution of each type of complaint.
- iii. System to monitor resolution of the complaints in PSPCL.
- iv. Recommendations to streamline the existing procedure/guidelines/regulations relating to Consumer Redressal Mechanism to ensure speedy resolution of complaints of the consumers.
- v. Measures to create public awareness regarding Grievance Redressal Mechanism.
- vi. Any other related matter with the permission of the Chair.

The Committee shall submit its interim report w.r.t ToR from (i) to (iii) above within four weeks to the Commission and submit its report within 8 weeks from the date of constitution of this Committee.

Secretary

Endst.No.1263-1270/PSERC/

Dated: 27.10.2017

Copy of the above is forwarded to the following for information and further necessary action, please:

1. Principal Secretary/ Power, Government of Punjab, Chandigarh
2. CMD/PSPCL, The Mall, Patiala
3. Director/Distribution, PSPCL, The Mall, Patiala
4. Chief Engineer/CGRF, PSPCL, Patiala
5. Sr.Xen/ST-2 o/o Director/Distribution, PSPCL, Patiala
6. Addl.SE/Electricity Call Centre, Janta Nagar Divn. , PSPCL, Ludhiana
7. Sr.Xen/DS Divn., PSPCL, Mohali.
8. Sh. K.K Singla Advisor/Power, PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry, PHD House, Sector 31-A, Chandigarh

Deputy Secretary/Admn.

CC:

- 1) Ms Parneet Mahal Suri, Director/M&F, PSERC Chandigarh.
- 2) Er. H. S. Bedi, Joint Director/Regulations, PSERC, Chandigarh.
- 3) Sr.P.S to Chairman/PSERC, Chandigarh
- 4) Sr.P.S to Member (S)/PSERC, Chandigarh
- 5) Sr.P.S to Member (A)/PSERC, Chandigarh
- 6) P.S to Secretary/PSERC, Chandigarh