

PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS REGULATORY BOARD

Guidelines for PNG domestic consumers' protection

- (1) These guidelines are issued under terms specified in condition no. 16 of Schedule D of Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (Authorizing Entities to Lay, Build, Operate or Expand City or Local Natural Gas Distribution Networks), Regulations, 2008 and are applicable with immediate effect.
- (2) These Guidelines are being issued in the interest of domestic PNG consumers from fraud or harassment by unauthorized persons.
- (3) Many instances have come to the notice of PNGRB regarding a wide spread and organized scam in many gas distribution networks involving persons flashing false identity cards and posing as authorized representatives or inspectors of either the Government or the concerned entities sent to check the fittings and accessories of gas stoves or other related equipment.
- (4) Such unauthorized persons posing as inspectors or agents generally charge large amounts of money from unsuspecting householders by declaring some parts or tubes to be defective and replacing these at

times with spurious parts, thereby endangering the safety of consumers.

(5) Guidelines for PNG domestic consumers' protection:-

- (a) PNG domestic consumers need to provide right of access only to the authorized agent for the purpose of reading, repairing, replacing or testing of the equipment if the authorized agent carries tamper-proof photo identity card and other proper identification and authorisation documents. Failing this, the consumer shall be at liberty to deny access.
- (b) It shall be the responsibility of the OMCs to intimate consumers the type of documentation and identification provided to their employees or the employees of their outsourced agencies so that an ordinary consumer would be able to distinguish between an authorised person and one who is posing as such.
- (c) Authorised entities shall intimate in advance to the consumers any scheduled inspection in an area.
- (d) In order to facilitate verification, Authorised entities are required to give contact numbers and names of names designated officers who can be contacted to verify whether the entity has deputed

any authorised person/s to a particular area. At least one of these phone numbers will be a human interface and not an automated response.

- (e) Upon inspection and in case of defect of equipment for PNG domestic consumers, charges if any, may be collected by the Authorised entities in the next monthly invoice after taking acknowledgement of the consumers for the parts replaced or work done. Such authorised representatives shall also carry an approved price list of items to be replaced.
- (f) Authorised entities shall immediately start a publicity campaign to create consumer awareness in this regard and should also include printed warnings and advice on the bills sent to every consumer, SMS to registered mobile numbers and also webhost such advice.
- (g) Invoices sent out by Authorised entities shall also indicate details like Name, Address and Telephone numbers of Incharge-Complaint Receiving Cell and Appellate Authority for dealing with consumer.

- (h) Authorised entities also need to advise consumers to report such incidents in the consumers' premises in the last one year. The Authorised entities shall check premises where such incidents had taken place and ensure that any spurious part is replaced to prevent accidents.

- (i) Authorised entities are also required to file FIRs in the concerned police station in the area where such incidents have taken place and also bring the details to the notice of State authorities and local law and order authority to crack down on such menace.

(R P Watal)
Secretary
Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board