

Draft Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020

September 26, 2020

The government has proposed to notify rules to ensure **minimum service standards to electricity consumers**. The draft Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020 seek to specify time limits for distribution companies for giving new electricity connections, and addressing grievances including the common ones like delayed and accumulated bills and faulty meters.

Presently, the **Consumer Charter under the Electricity Act 2003** provides a synopsis of rights of consumers of electricity but most states have not implemented them.

The main features are:

- **Reliability of service:** SERCs to fix average number and duration of outages per consumer per year for DISCOMs.
- **Timely and simplified procedure for connection:** Only two documents for connection up to load of 10 kw and no estimation of demand charges for loads up to 150 kw to expedite giving connection.
- Time period of not more than 7 days in metro cities, 15 days in other municipal areas and 30 days in rural areas, to provide new connections and modify existing connections.
- 2 to 5% rebate on serving bills with a delay of sixty days or more.
- Option to pay bills in cash, cheque, debit cards, net banking, but bills of Rs. 1000 or more to be paid online.
- Provisions related to disconnection, reconnection, meter replacement, billing, payment, etc.
- Recognition to the emerging category of consumers known

as “**Prosumers**”. Persons who are consumers and have also set up rooftop units or solarised their irrigation pumps. They will have the **right to produce electricity for self-use and inject excess in the grid** using the same point of connection up to limits prescribed by the SERC.

- **Compensation/ penalties for delay in service** by DISCOMs; compensation to be automatic as far as possible, to be passed on in the bill.
- **24×7 toll free call centre, web-based and mobile applications** for common services like new connection, disconnection, reconnection, shifting of connection, change in name and particulars, load change, replacement of meter, no supply, etc with facilities for sms/email alerts, online status tracking and auto escalation.
- **Consumer grievance redressal forum** with 2-3 representatives of consumers at various levels starting from Sub-division for ease of consumer grievance redressal.