CUSTOMER UPDATE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON ELECTRICITY STANDING CHARGES FOR EMPTY PROPERTIES: UPDATED

At Connect Saint Helena Ltd, we are committed to providing clear, transparent information about how your electricity charges are calculated. Below are the frequently asked questions we have received in relation to the standing charge on empty properties.

What are standing charges?

Standing charges are a fixed charge intended to cover the cost of maintaining the infrastructure necessary to deliver electricity to your property. This includes:

- Maintaining the electricity grid and local distribution network
- Meter maintenance and routine safety checks
- Readiness to supply electricity on demand
- Administrative services and customer support
- Emergency response and system reliability

These services remain in place regardless of how much electricity you use — or whether you are using any at all — ensuring that the electricity supply is immediately available whenever needed.

Why are standing charges being applied to empty properties?

Electricity maintenance costs have increased, coupled with a declining customer base. There is a burden on Connect to ensure that the infrastructure supporting every connection to the electricity grid is maintained. This means we continue to incur costs to ensure the safe and reliable operation of the system for every connected property, including those with usage below 10 units.

The empty properties standing charge is applied whenever a property does not consume sufficient units of electricity to bring in sufficient revenue to recover the basic costs of maintaining the infrastructure to that property.

What is an empty property?

An empty property is defined as one that consumes less than 10 units of electricity in the quarter under review. This can be due to temporary inoccupation, or long-term absence.

What if my property is occupied?

The empty property standing charge applies to all properties that consume less than 10 units per quarter. This means that it also applies to properties that are occupied but which have very low usage.

If I have two meters on the same property, do I pay the standing charge?

Yes. The standing charge is applied to every meter where consumption is below 10 units per quarter. However, in very exceptional circumstances an exemption might apply.

Are exemptions available?

Yes. Each request for exemption is considered on a case by case basis.

For example, the empty property standing charge need not apply to properties under construction or deemed uninhabitable, but will take effect from the point that occupancy has been approved.

Similarly, if the property has low electricity usage due to unforeseen exceptional circumstances (for example, if the occupants are absent on medical grounds), an exemption may also apply.

Connect has also considered unique cases where a single property has two meters. We have granted exemptions where we can see that this has arisen through the design of the property, typically in historic buildings. This exemption does not apply where a property has more than one use (for example, there might be a domestic dwelling and a small business on the same property, each with its own meter) or where the property has deliberately been wired separately (for example, a domestic dwelling with a separate garage alongside the dwelling).

Exemptions are also available for religious organisations and charities.

Options for Long-Term Unoccupied Properties

We recognise that some properties may remain unoccupied for extended periods, such as holiday homes, rentals, or properties under renovation. In such cases, customers may consider the following options:

- Temporary Disconnection: This can pause standing charges, but may involve a reconnection fee when service is restored.
- Account Review: Our customer support team can help assess your account and recommend any available options based on your property's status.

Options for Low-Usage Properties

We understand that for some customers it is not feasible or desirable for them to consume 10 units of electricity per quarter. Our concern is that this means we do not recover the minimum amount to cover the fixed costs of providing services to the property. The standing charge is our way of recovering this cost.

If you believe you have grounds for an exemption from the standing charge, please contact our customer services team (see details below).

Our Commitment

We understand that charges on empty properties can be a concern for some customers. We are committed to supporting our customers through clear communication, flexible service options, and responsive customer care. The FAQs are being updated as we receive more questions so please keep checking for updates.

For more information or assistance with your account, please contact our customer service team at 22255 or via enquiries@connect.co.sh, or visit our website at www.connect.co.sh.

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