

## **Improved Service Delivery from the Barbados Water Authority**

by Project Manager, Marketing & Communications, Barbados Water Authority

Customers of the Barbados Water Authority would have in recent months witnessed a number of enhancements to its customer service systems. They are just part of a comprehensive programme to be implemented in the coming months to significantly improve the Authority's relationship with its customers.



The customer service enhancements include the introduction of a new billing schedule coupled with greater payment options for customers via SurePay. The facility to make Internet payments via Scotia Bank and Royal Bank, shortly, will also significantly enhance the revenue capabilities of the Authority.

The Barbados Water Authority has also undertaken a review of the channels through which it communicates with its customers and will shortly be implementing a new communications system to enhance the efficiency of interacting with customers.

Further enhancements are coming, which will see modifications to our customer care call centre, to allow for the better tracking of issues within the Authority and the prompt communication of these issues with customers.

In previous months, the BWA's billing system was behind, in that we read meters at the end of the month, billed 30 days later and gave customers 30 days to pay. With our new billing schedule, customers can expect a more timely and consistent delivery of their bills, thereby enhancing their ability to keep their payments up to date and to assist with better budgeting. The Barbados Water Authority will be reading meters daily, generating bills every day for delivery to customers who will now have 20 days in which to pay.

This new schedule brings the Authority's billing cycle in line with other utilities and allows for a better relationship with the Barbados Postal Service thereby leading to a speedier delivery of bills. Both customers and the Barbados Water Authority will benefit from this improved system.

Customers can now expect to receive their bill on a more timely and consistent basis. This will allow for better budgeting and monitoring of water use. It is also expected to lead to a reduction in estimated bills but this aspect has been hampered due to manpower constraints, which should soon be settled.

The biggest benefit to the customer however, will be the elimination of the occurrence of timely payments for the previous bill, showing as arrears on the

current bill. This had previously been a major irritant for our customers who were required to pay bills in arrears at BWA Payment Centres only.

This improved level of efficiency and productivity and the introduction of greater avenues to make bill payments, should go a long way towards improving the collection of water rates and arrears and minimise people going into arrears.

The Barbados Water Authority will also benefit from this improved collection system through better cash flows, an enhanced revenue system and better customer service. These new initiatives will enhance our ability to systematically reduce the arrears on water rates.



Persons with bills in arrears must make payment at any BWA Payment Centre: Pine or Coles Building or any Surepay location before 2:00 p.m. to avoid disconnection. Payments made after 2:00 p.m. however, may still be subject to disconnection.

The Barbados Water Authority is currently reviewing the operations of its Recoveries section to better handle the collection of arrears and will be launching a renewed thrust to reduce arrears in the coming months.

The Collections Programme launched some months ago has borne fruit but much more needs to be done to reduce the level of arrears and the recurrence of persons falling into arrears.

Our overall customer service is also being improved to ensure a more timely, responsive and accurate response to customer issues.

Our customers are becoming more demanding, hence the need to refine our procedures and operations to cope with a more demanding customer. Customers have been demanding a speedier response to their issues from burst pipes and mains to water outages, water discolouration and billing queries.

The Barbados Water Authority currently has two Customer Service Centres: Pine and Coles Building, along with a Call Centre to address customer issues. These operations deal with written, oral and personal complaints from the spectrum of the BWA's customer base in both the water and wastewater sections.

An improved issues-tracking system is coming, which will allow our internal customers to track each issue from beginning to end in a seamless way. This would then allow for a better delivery of information to customers.

In the coming months, the Barbados Water Authority will step up its marketing/communications drive to communicate these and other initiatives to its customers.



A new and improved Barbados Water Authority, responsive to the needs of its customers, responding in a timely basis to issues and problems within the distribution system and assuring and guaranteeing all Barbadians a consistent 24-hour supply of water of the highest quality, delivered by quality staff is our aim.