

THE NERC ORDER ON UNAUTHORISED ACCESS, METER TAMPERING AND BYPASS

In a bid to discourage meter tampering and reduce collection losses to electricity distribution companies (DisCos), the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) has issued the NERC Order on Unauthorised Access, Meter Tampering and By-Pass ("the Order"). The Order was made on the 6th December 2017 and was issued pursuant to NERC's powers under the **Electric Power Sector Reform Act 2005** and the **Connection & Disconnection Procedures for Electricity Services Regulations 2007**.



The tampering and bypassing of meters by electricity customers remains one of the reasons DisCos give for their failure to reduce collection losses in metered areas. Meter tampering and bypass refers to the practice of interfering with meters such that the readings are not reflective of the actual electricity consumed by the customers.

reconnection costs.

The Order specifies conditions for the reconnection of customers to a DisCo's distribution network following disconnection due to meter tampering and bypass. The conditions include significant reconnection costs to be paid by the errant customers depending on the class of customer concerned. Customers are also required to pay administrative charges in addition to the prescribed

Furthermore, the DisCos are permitted to reclaim lost revenue from illegally connected customers by charging and back-billing for the period of the unauthorised connection.

Customers are entitled to reconnection within 48 hours of paying reconnection costs, administrative costs and any tariffs reclaimed by a DisCo. Where a DisCo fails to reconnect a customer within the stated time, such DisCo will be liable to pay delayed

reconnection costs for each day of delay. DisCos are also liable to pay re-connection costs to customers who were disconnected unlawfully.

In conclusion, the Order is geared towards fulfilling the following objectives: firstly, it seeks to deter electricity consumers from obtaining unauthorised access to the distribution network which should reduce incidences of revenue loss for DisCos; secondly, it empowers the DisCos to recover lost revenues from customers who by-pass or tamper with electricity meters. It also seeks to deter the DisCos from abusing their powers through the unlawful disconnection of customers or by delaying reconnection for customers who have made the required payments.