

Zesa not yet ready to switch to prepaid meters



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Energy and Power Development Minister
Elton Mangoma

Peter Matambanadzo Senior Reporter

Zesa Holdings is not yet ready to roll out its pre-paid household electricity meter project despite Government having engaged a service provider early this month.

Energy and Power Development Minister Elton Mangoma on September 3 had said the project would be rolled out in two weeks but

nothing has materialised.

The minister confirmed that the State Procurement Board has already carried out the adjudication process, which was delaying implementation and a tender was awarded last week.

The minister said under the first phase at least 600 000 households in Harare and Bulawayo would be connected to the new pre-paid electricity meters.

Some Zesa offices already have a special desk for pre-paid electricity meters inquiries.

An official at one of the branches said customers have to clear their current bills before filling an application form for them to get the pre-paid electricity meter in two months.

However, when asked about this Zesa Holdings spokesperson Mr Fullard Gwasira said it might be some mischievous officials who were doing this.

"We are not aware of this as there is no waiting list. What we know is that once we have these meters all households would automatically have them installed," Mr Gwasira said.

"If you tell your readers that we have these meters and we have already started installing them you will cause unnecessary panic and we will denounce it. We don't have anything and we have not installed even one. We are just waiting for the meters," Mr Gwasira said.

Mr Gwasira said only trial meters had been installed in some households.

Zesa Holdings mooted the pre-paid electricity project many years ago as part of measures the power utility came up with to deal with outstanding bills.

Zesa is owed over US\$450 million by its customers in unpaid bills.

Under the pre-paid metering system, customers buy electricity units that will then be fed into their respective meters. One will only enjoy power supplies while the units last.

The system is vastly different from the present one where Zesa bills customers for a month's consumption.

In recent months, this has caused problems with most consumers complaining of the bills, some of which are estimates and hardly reflect actual consumption.

The new system would enable the power utility to raise funds for electricity generation.

Prepayment will also enable direct budgeting where the consumer can be able to directly relate electricity usage with the amount of money required, while bringing the time between purchase and consumption to as short an interval as possible.

