

MAHARASHTRA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
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GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDING PUBLIC HEARING THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCE

1. The Commission, vide Practice Directions dated 11 May 2020, has laid down procedure to be followed for proceedings to be conducted by remote access through E-hearings (Video Conference) for urgent matters. These Practice Directions have been amended on 13 July, 2020 to conduct the regular hearings and to cover other Petitions as well, apart from urgent Petitions. Considering the positive and hassle free experience of E-hearings, the Commission is intending to schedule e-Public Hearings through Video Conference.

The provisions of the MERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2004, in certain categories of Petitions mandate a Public Hearing/s to be conducted after issuing the Public Notices inviting suggestions/objections from the Public/stakeholders. In these e-Public Hearings, any person or stakeholder can participate and can additionally make oral submissions before the Commission after intimating his/ her prior request on specified email IDs in response to the specific public notice. Accordingly, the Commission will be scheduling e-Public Hearings (through Video Conferencing facility) which will also be live streamed.

2. The Practice Directions & Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the Commission on 11 May and 13 July, 2020 shall be followed by all participants during e-Public Hearings through video conferencing in addition to these 'Guidelines'. The Practice Directions & SOP issued by the Commission on 11th May and 13 July, 2020 shall be applicable '*Mutatis Mutandis*' to the all e-Public Hearings along with these guidelines which are being issued herewith. Therefore, in accordance with the above referred Practice Directions and Guidelines all the persons /stakeholders participating in e- Public Hearings shall follow the procedure and appear in manner/make his /her or its submissions as mandated, in advance.
 - i. In response to the Public Notice published in specific matters, every person who intends to file suggestions/ objections can submit the same in English or Marathi language in writing mandatorily through electronic means/Email and the objector/sender should mention the full name, postal address, Indian mobile number and e-mail address. The Objector/sender should also indicate whether the suggestions/ objections in electronic form through email are being filed on behalf of any organization or category of consumers.

- ii. If the objector/sender wants to be heard in person and participate in the Public Hearing through e-Hearing, such request should be specifically mentioned at the time of filing of suggestions /objections. In such cases, submission of email ID and Mobile Number would be mandatory and a Login credential and link for e-Public Hearing will be provided to such persons only on email ID one day or two days prior to the scheduled e-Public Hearing.
 - iii. The IT officials of the Commission will also conduct a test run of e-Public Hearing one day or two days prior to the scheduled e-Public Hearing for testing the video and audio of the persons wishing to participate and want to speak in the e-Public Hearing. The person/s wishing to speak or make his/her submission in the e-Public Hearing shall attend test run conducted for the e-Public Hearing, wherein he/she can get familiarized with the associated Software Application for hassle-free participation during the e-Public Hearing.
 - iv. During the e-Public Hearing, the person would make his oral submission only when he/she is called for making his submission. Further, prior to making his/her oral submission, such person (excluding Advocate) will be sworn on oath, by the nominated officer of the Commission while commencing his/her oral submission before the Commission during the e-Public Hearing.
 - v. Since a very large number of persons appear and make their comments during public hearing, it would be onerous to ask each person to record his/her satisfaction in the chat window provided during e public hearing. To make it easy for everyone only the exception, which could mainly be due to technical difficulties in communication link, is being asked for comments. Accordingly, it would be presumed that the individual hearing was satisfactory unless specifically commented otherwise by the person concerned in the chat window, immediately after the conclusion of his/her comments during public hearing. In such a case, Commission could give another opportunity to that person for repeating his/her comments.
3. These Guidelines for e- Public Hearings are in addition to the Practice Directions and SOP issued by the Commission on 11th May and 13th July, 2020. The protocols stipulated therein for remote access e-hearing through video conference, and the Practice Directions with SOP shall be applicable 'Mutatis Mutandis' in the e-Public Hearings before the Commission.

Sd/-
(Mukesh Khullar)
Member

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Member

