



## Public Service Commission

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Gregg C. Sayre, Interim Chairman

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**17045/17-G-0245; 17-E-0173; 17-E-0164; 17-M-0281**

### **PSC Assesses Electric Reliability, Customer Service and Gas and Electric Safety of State's Large Utilities**

#### **— Customer Service and Other Utility Performances Found Satisfactory in 2016 —**

**ALBANY** — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today received an annual review from Department of Public Service staff that assessed the major utilities in terms of their performance in a number of key areas, including electric reliability service, gas safety, electric safety, and customer service for 2016. New York State utilities provided a satisfactory level of customer service in 2016 and while there was an increase in the number of service interruptions, those outages were shorter than the historical averages.

“Overall, financial incentives and strong oversight by the Department of Public Service have been effective in encouraging utilities to make customer service a priority,” said **Interim Commission Chairman Gregg Sayre**. “Department staff will continue to monitor customer service quality and promote performance-based ratemaking strategies to maintain and improve the quality of customer service.”

The annual reports measured utility performance in key services areas, including electric reliability, gas safety, electric safety and customer service. The reports were presented to the Commission by Department staff.

Performance indicator data shows that all New York State utilities provided a satisfactory level of service in 2016. The utilities also met or exceeded the standards for performance on the measures of customer service. Three utilities — Central Hudson Gas and Electric Corporation (Central Hudson), Orange & Rockland Utilities, Inc. (Orange & Rockland), and St. Lawrence Gas Company, Inc. (St. Lawrence Gas) —also earned financial credits for lowering customer terminations and uncollectible bills. The complete report is available [here](#).

Staff of the Department of Public Service also presented reports on electric reliability, gas safety and electric safety standards.

Excluding major storms, the electric system statewide interruption frequency in 2016 was 8 percent higher than the previous year. The frequency was also greater than the statewide five-year average. However, the statewide duration of these outages was 6.1 percent better than last year and 2.7 percent better than the statewide five-year average. Three major causes for interruptions, excluding storms, were contacts between trees and power lines followed by equipment failures and accidents. The complete report on electric reliability performance is available [here](#).

The staff also reported that New York utilities were in compliance with electric safety standards. The Commission established these standards in 2005 to safeguard the public from exposure to stray voltage and to identify and eliminate potentially harmful conditions before serious safety hazards and/or reliability deficiencies develop.

The electric safety standards include: (1) stray voltage testing of streetlights and electric facilities that are accessible to the public, using certified voltage detection devices; (2) inspection of utility electric facilities on a minimum of a five-year cycle; (3) recordkeeping, certification, quality assurance and reporting requirements; and, (4) adoption of the National Electric Safety Code as the minimum standard governing utility construction, maintenance, and operations.

Manual stray voltage testing was performed on approximately one million facilities across the State last year identifying 547 stray voltage conditions 60 percent of which were associated with streetlights. Mobile testing which focuses on underground infrastructure was also performed in the New York City, Buffalo, and Rochester areas. All utilities are in compliance with the inspection requirement with approximately 822,000 facilities visually inspected in 2016. The complete report on utility compliance with Electric Safety Standards is available [here](#).

Department Staff also evaluated critical areas of gas safety, including damage prevention, emergency response times and leak management. Over the past 14 years: local distribution companies have seen a nearly 71 percent improvement in total damage performance; the 30-minute emergency response time has improved from 76.8 percent to 82.8 percent; and the year-end backlog of potentially hazardous leaks has decreased 95 percent, from 1,154 to 58.

Over the past nine years, the total leak backlog (including minor leaks) has decreased 35.3 percent. As companies continue their outreach efforts, adopt better practices in responding to leak and odor calls, and work to replace aging leak prone infrastructure, staff expects further improvements will occur. The complete report on gas safety performance is available [here](#).

The Commission's decision in this proceeding, may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at [www.dps.ny.gov](http://www.dps.ny.gov) and entering the Case Numbers 17-G-0245, 17-E-0173, 17-E-0164, 17-M-0281 in the input box labeled "Search by Case Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release. For more information, you may also visit your service provider's website.