

STATE OF NEW YORK

Public Service Commission

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REVIEW UNDERWAY REGARDING UTILITIES' STORM PERFORMANCE — Focus Includes Utilities' Response, Restoration & Communication Efforts —

Albany, NY—09/15/11—The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today received a briefing from staff of the Department of Public Service concerning the impacts of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee on New York's utility and telecom services; the Commission also heard staff's plans to conduct a formal review of the performance of New York's regulated utilities.

“The intense storms that wracked New York in late August and early September created great hardship for hundreds of thousands of families and businesses in New York, as well as causing extraordinary damage to the state's utility infrastructure,” said Commission Chairman Garry Brown. “Staff will now begin an examination of the utilities' performance, including the adequacy of disaster planning and efforts to restore power and communicate with customers.”

At its peak, Hurricane Irene's sustained high winds and heavy rains, which began August 28, caused significant flash flooding and uprooting of trees that left nearly a million New York utility customers without power. Shortly thereafter, on September 4 through September 9, Tropical Storm Lee brought heavy rains and major flooding in the Southern Tier and other parts of the state already saturated from Hurricane Irene.

Along with electric service outages, staff noted that natural gas service and water service in the Central and other regions of the state were also disrupted due to mud slides and flooding. In addition, at the peak of the storms some 735,000 wireline telephone customers were without

service throughout the state due to more than 4,900 downed drop wires, more than 560 broken or damaged utility poles, and more than 460 damaged aerial and underground distribution cables.

During the storm events, staff was in constant communication with the electric utilities concerning implementation of their emergency response plans and deployment of utility restoration crews and contractors, and the securing of additional help from out-of-state contractors and utility mutual assistance crews—some from as far away as Colorado. More than 3,200 electric utility crews were working following Hurricane Irene, in addition to the numerous other utility personnel to support the outage restoration efforts.

Working with 28 different telecommunications companies over the course of the storms, staff monitored restoration progress statewide and focused additional attention on facility failures due to flooding in areas served by Middleburgh Telephone Company and Pattersonville Telephone Company. Staff also assisted with the placement and activation of portable cellular services in the hardest hit areas of the state.

Natural gas service in several parts of the state had to be shut off as a safety precaution—1,500 shut offs during Hurricane Irene and 8,000 shutoffs during Tropical Storm Lee. Staff monitored the lengthy process to relight gas service to individual customers as pockets of gas customers were able to accept gas service. Flooding in Tioga County caused some 2,000 feet of water main damage and outages to 1,700 customers served by United Water resulting in a continued notice to boil water.

Staff monitored 60 utility municipal conferences and extended the hours of operation of the Commission's consumer assistance toll-free Help Line, as well as staffing 50 shifts (31 employees) of the State Office of Emergency Management's (SOEM) operations and nine shifts (34 employees) at the Belleayre and Schoharie Emergency Operation Centers. In addition, over 15 engineers (several on call 24 x 7) supported the SOEM operation.

Due to the extended length of outages (i.e., more than 3 days), Commission regulation 16 NYCRR Part 105, Electric Utility Emergency Plan, requires the electric utilities to perform an

internal performance review and submit their finds to the Commission within 60 days following the completion of service restoration. Reports concerning response to Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee will be due in mid-November.

Staff will be performing its review to determine if the utilities responded appropriately, and to identify whether improvements can be made from the “lessons learned” during the event. Additionally, staff will review telecommunications companies’ assessment of storm damages, restoration of service and steps to be taken to prevent future outages, as well as customer refunds for out-of-service periods.

Staff’s assessment of the electric utilities’ performance in responding to these storms will be based on a combination of factors, including: a thorough review of the self-assessment reports filed by the electric utilities, as required by the Commission’s regulations, discussions and interviews with public officials, evaluation of complaint data filed with the Commission’s Office of Consumer Services, and public comments.

Public comments can be submitted via the Commission’s toll-free Opinion Line at 1-800-335-2120; the Internet at Secretary@dps.state.ny.us; or by mail to Honorable Jaclyn A. Brillling, Secretary, New York State Public Service Commission, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, New York 12223. Please mention Case 11-E-0481 in your comments.

Staff’s assessment, when issued, will be available for public comment and may be obtained by going to the Commission’s www.dps.state.ny.us Web site and entering Case 11-M-0481 in the input box labeled “Search for Case/Matter Number.” Many libraries offer free Internet access. Also, staff’s assessment, when available, may be obtained from the Commission’s Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500).