

STATE OF NEW YORK

# Public Service Commission

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## UTILITIES COMPLY WITH ELECTRIC SAFETY STANDARDS

### — Power Providers Testing for Potentially Dangerous Stray Voltage —

Albany, NY—06/18/09—The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today received a report from Staff of the Department of Public Service (Staff) concerning electric utilities' compliance with Electric Safety Standards. These standards were established by the Commission to help ensure the safety of the public from stray voltage and to enhance the reliability of the electric system in the State of New York.

“The safe and adequate delivery of electric service is a top priority of the Commission and the electric safety standards reflect our commitment to New Yorkers to ensure utility services are provided as safely as possible,” said Commission Chairman Garry Brown. “The standards are comprehensive and thorough for testing utilities' facilities that are most accessible to the public to identify and eliminate potentially harmful conditions before serious safety hazards and/or reliability deficiencies develop.”

The term “stray voltage” means voltage conditions on electric facilities that should not ordinarily exist. These conditions may be due to one or more factors, including, but not limited to: damaged cables; deteriorated, frayed or missing insulation; improper maintenance; or improper installation.

The Commission's statewide electric safety standards implemented in January 2005, include requirements that the regulated electric utilities in the State annually test all of their publicly accessible transmission and distribution facilities for stray voltage and inspect all

electric facilities at least once every five years. The testing and inspection cycles required under the standards were amended on a going-forward basis in December 2008.

Staff's report to the Commission today indicates that stray voltage testing was performed on almost 4 million transmission and distribution facilities across the State. The 2008 test results reveal that testing of streetlights along public thoroughfares remains an issue of concern, particularly in Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc.'s (Con Edison) service territory.

In order to mitigate this concern, Con Edison commenced a program in 2008 to install up to 163,000 isolation transformers and associated connectors in underground structures supplying street lamps and traffic signals in New York City and Westchester County. It is expected that this measure will essentially eliminate stray voltage conditions attributable to street lamps and traffic signals. This program is scheduled to be completed by 2017. As of the end of 2008, the company has installed approximately 1500 units, and is targeting to install a total of 8800 for 2009.

Utilities' compliance with the Commission's electric safety standard requirement to inspect all electric facilities over a five-year cycle appears to be on schedule. As of November 2008, approximately 92 percent of the State's electric facilities have been inspected. Staff noted that all utilities met or exceeded the 80 percent overall inspection targets established for completion by the end of 2008.

Staff further noted that the utilities have been making timely repairs to high and intermediate level substandard conditions, however, response to lower level or non-critical conditions has resulted in a backlog of these repairs in National Grid's service territory. The Commission's newly established repair requirements, effective as of 2009, should help eliminate the backlog of these non-critical conditions. Staff will continue to monitor the utilities' efforts to ensure that inspections are properly performed and that timely repairs are made when substandard conditions are discovered.

Staff's 2008 report examining the safety of electric transmission and distribution systems in Case 04-M-0159, when issued, may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at [www.dps.state.ny.us](http://www.dps.state.ny.us) and entering Case Number 04-M-0159 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number." Many libraries offer free Internet access. The Commission's decision also can be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14<sup>th</sup> floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500).