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John B. Rhodes, Chair

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PSC Receives Reports on Electric Reliability, Customer Service and Gas and Electric Safety of State's Large Utilities
— Commission Continues to Scrutinize Utility's Response to Major Storms —

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today reviewed the major utilities in terms of their performance in a number of key areas in 2017, including electric reliability service, gas safety, electric safety, and customer service. Excluding major storms, the general reliability of the State's electric system in 2017 improved from 2016. However, major storms continue to provide a challenge for New York's utilities. Last year saw almost twice as many hours of outages than 2016, driven in large part by the March 2017 windstorm that swept the Finger Lakes and Western New York.

These reports are good news in reporting that New York's utilities are doing a good job in providing safe and reliable gas and electric service to New York's businesses and residents, who depend on this in normal weather," **said Commission Chair John B. Rhodes.** "We also know, and the recent severe storms surely remind us, that utilities also need to prepare and respond to abnormal weather. Some utilities have fallen short of our expectations in this regard and we will continue to act aggressively to ensure the utilities are prepared for these events as well."

The annual reports presented today measure utility performance in key services areas:

Electric Reliability: Each year, Department staff performs a detailed analysis of electric reliability performance. To gauge reliability performance, staff evaluates two primary components: the frequency of service interruptions and the duration of these interruptions. Excluding major storms, the electric system statewide interruption frequency is consistent with the statewide five-year average. Roughly one in three outages were due to contacts between trees and power lines, largely from limbs and trees from outside the clearance zone falling due to failure, disease, or weather conditions. Given the significant weather events that have already occurred in 2018, including the winter storms in early March and the high-wind event on May 15, Department staff expects the customer outages including major storms will be higher in next year's report.

Electric Safety: New York utilities were in compliance with electric safety standards in 2017. 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. New York's electric safety standards continue to have some of the most stringent requirements when compared to other states across the nation. In 2017, the total

number of stray-voltage testing findings continues a downward trend from previous years. Utilities are also required to complete visual inspections on 20 percent of their facilities each year, so that all of the utility's transmission and distribution facilities will be inspected at least once every five years. All utilities are in compliance with the inspection requirement with approximately 700,000 facilities visually inspected in 2017.

Gas Safety: Department staff evaluated critical areas of gas safety, including damage prevention, emergency response times, leak management, and non-compliances identified through staff's audit process. Overall, the data indicates that performance has substantially improved for the State's local distribution companies (LDCs). The damage prevention measure gauges the success of LDCs in minimizing damage to buried natural gas facilities caused by excavation activities. The total damage prevention measure improved significantly, approximately 23 percent, from the previous year. The emergency response time measure reflects the LDCs' ability to respond promptly to reports of leak, odor, and emergency notifications. The overall year-end 2017 leak backlog was higher by seven repairable leaks when compared to 2016, but is down approximately 40 percent when compared to 2013. For total leak backlogs, which includes non-hazardous leaks, the overall year-end 2017 backlog total fell by 2,354 leaks, approximately 14 percent from year-end 2016, and is also down 40 percent when compared to 2013. As companies continue their outreach efforts, adopt better practices in responding to leak, odor, and emergency notifications, and work to replace aging leak prone infrastructure, Department staff expects further improvements will occur.

Customer Service: For New York State utilities, consumer service performance metrics contain targets for Commission complaint rates and survey measures of customer satisfaction. For the most part, the electric and gas utilities met or exceeded the standards for customer service for 2017; except for Rochester Gas & Electric Corporation, which failed to meet certain targets, resulting in a negative revenue adjustment totaling \$525,000 borne by shareholders, not customers. Aside from the deficits at RG&E, customer service performance has steadily improved over the last several years, and this trend continued in 2017.

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 and entering the Case Numbers [18-G-0260](#); [18-M-0267](#); [18-E-0153](#); [18-E-0279](#) 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.