

STATE OF NEW YORK

# Public Service Commission

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## **ELECTRIC UTILITIES IN COMPLIANCE WITH SAFETY STANDARDS — Good News: Stray Voltage Shocks Decline Significantly —**

Albany, NY—06/16/11—The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today received a report from staff of the Department of Public Service (staff) concerning 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 New York State.

“Compliance with electric safety standards remains an effective mechanism to ensure the safe and reliable operation of the electric system,” said Commission Chairman Garry Brown. “The standards are comprehensive and provide for thorough testing of 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 Commission's statewide electric safety standards require that regulated electric utilities in the state annually test, either manually or with mobile-scanning equipment, publically accessible electric transmission and distribution facilities for stray voltage, and all publically accessible streetlights, whether they are owned by the utility or not.

In addition, the utilities are also required to inspect all of their electric facilities at least every five years. 2010 marked the first year of the second five-year inspection cycle of New York State's entire system-wide facilities. In general, the visual inspection program has had a positive impact

in raising the level of awareness by all investor-owned utilities of the potential for stray voltage and the need to correct deficiencies in an appropriate manner and timeframe.

Stray voltage means voltage conditions on electric facilities that should not ordinarily exist. Such incidents are caused by one or more factors, such as damaged cables; deteriorated, frayed or missing insulation; improper maintenance; or improper installation.

Staff reported that manual stray voltage testing was performed on approximately 4 million transmission and distribution facilities and streetlights across the State. The rate of stray voltage findings declined from 2009 to 2010, the second consecutive year that the totals have decreased.

Since 2008 Consolidated Edison Company of New York has been required to complete 12 system mobile scans on an annual basis. In July of 2010, the Commission ordered two mobile scan surveys to be completed in Buffalo and one each in Yonkers, White Plains, Albany, Niagara Falls, Rochester, and New Rochelle. In Buffalo, the area of concern last year, mobile test results indicate a significant decline from 2009 to 2010.

The Commission determined today to continue the existing requirements for mobile testing for stray voltage in the previously identified upstate communities for at least an additional year with the potential for a third mobile scan in Buffalo, if necessary. This will provide further data, thereby allowing the Commission to make a more informed determination on the efficacy of mobile testing going forward.

As noted by staff, utilities achieved the target performance levels prescribed for stray voltage testing and facility inspection and did not incur any revenue adjustments in 2010 under performance mechanisms. Today's action demonstrates the Commission's continued national leadership in ensuring public safety in terms of monitoring, preventing and correcting incidences of stray voltage.

Staff's report and the Commission order in Case 11-E-0267, when issued, may be obtained from the Commission's [www.dps.state.ny.us](http://www.dps.state.ny.us) Web site by accessing the Commission's Search section

of the homepage and referencing Case 11-E-0267. Many libraries offer free Internet access. Staff reports and Commission orders may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14<sup>th</sup> floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500).