

STATE OF NEW YORK

Public Service Commission

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FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY

08064/08-M-0593

PSC Evaluates Standardized Facility and Equipment Transfer (SAFE-T) Program -Program to Provide Timely Removal and/or Installation of Utility Poles-

Albany, NY—05/21/08—The New York State Public Service Commission today initiated a proceeding to evaluate and develop the potential benefits of a standardized facility and equipment transfer (SAFE-T) program. The program is intended to enhance the coordination, communication, monitoring and notification relating to facility transfers between utility poles owned by electric and telephone companies.

“Installing new poles and related conduit is essential to maintaining safe, adequate and reliable service,” said Commission Chairman Garry Brown. “Removal of older, often structurally unsound poles, has not kept pace with new installations. This often results in partial transfer of facilities and the placement of old and new poles in close proximity until the transfer is complete. In the interest of public safety and to lower costs, the Commission seeks to establish better coordination efforts between utilities transferring facilities and equipment to new poles and to speed the removal of old poles.”

Based upon routine field inspections of utilities facilities by Staff of the Department of Public Service (Staff), Staff identified incomplete facility transfers for approximately five percent of the observed poles. Staff advised the Commission that most of the incomplete facilities transfers involve poles no longer suitable for use and/or abandoned for extended periods of time. When field inspections identify nonstandard conditions, Staff reports them to the pole owners for corrective action and records the information in a database for statistical analysis.

Staff's analysis of its field inspections noted that coordination among utilities and other parties regarding the transfer of facilities to new poles appears inconsistent and the result of a lack of means to effectively communicate.

While there are general industry protocols for facility transfers involving the relocation of the poles by the electric utility, followed by facility transfer by the telecommunications carriers and other parties, ineffective communication often delays transfer by the telecommunication carriers and other parties to new poles, which ultimately delays the removal of old poles. Since telecommunications facilities are transferred after electric, the telecommunications carriers are usually responsible for pole removal.

Staff also reported to the Commission that it is probable that the magnitude of double-pole conditions in New York is significant. If allowed to continue, the safety, reliability and efficiency of the provision of utility and public service may be compromised. Various state agencies, municipalities and citizens have submitted numerous complaints over the years concerning incomplete facility transfers. Consequently, the Commission today concluded there is a need to institute a proceeding to evaluate and develop the potential benefits of a SAFE-T program for the transfer of electric and telephone facilities in order to ameliorate double-pole conditions.

The Commission will issue a written order reflecting today's decision. That order, when available, can be obtained from the Commission's www.dps.state.ny.us Web site by accessing the Commission Documents section of the homepage and referencing Case 08-M-0593. Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission orders can also be obtained from its Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500).