



STATE OF NEW YORK | EXECUTIVE CHAMBER

ANDREW M. CUOMO | GOVERNOR

For Immediate Release: August 15, 2013

**GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES STRENGTHENED EMERGENCY AND STORM
RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS FOR UTILITIES**

Public Service Commission Enacts Reforms from Moreland Commission Report

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) has taken several critically important steps to substantially improve and strengthen the performance of New York's large electric utilities during and after major storm events. These actions stem from recommendations made by the Moreland Commission on Utility Storm Preparation and Response, instituted by Governor Cuomo to investigate the electric utilities' management, preparation and response to the major storms that have affected New York State over the past two years, including Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee.

"From our experience with extreme weather these last few years, it is clear that New York State's electric utilities need to improve their preparation and response for future storms and emergencies," Governor Cuomo said. "The investigation by the Moreland Commission on Utility Storm Preparation and Response identified many ways that the state's utilities can do just that. Today's actions by the Public Service Commission will build upon the efforts already underway to protect our residents and businesses from future significant storm-related outages, and ensure that utilities are held accountable during these events."

The PSC ordered the six major investor-owned utilities operating in New York State, as part of their revised emergency response plans due on December 15, 2013, to implement reforms to three main issues identified in the Moreland Commission's final report, including:

- Electric utilities should improve their development and timely issuance of localized estimated restoration times (ETRs).
- Electric utilities need to engage in an industry-wide effort to address deficiencies in the current mutual assistance process.
- Electric utilities need defined procedures for responding to large-scale flooding events.

"The provision of safe and reliable electricity is critical to the health and security of New Yorkers," said PSC Chairman Garry Brown. "To fulfill this important obligation, utilities must appropriately respond to emergencies. The actions we are taking today will help ensure that utilities are adequately prepared to respond to emergency events, and that they respond appropriately to the challenge of restoring service promptly and efficiently."

In addition to utility-specific recommendations put forth by the Moreland Commission, the PSC today ordered utilities to address a number of other recommendations in their electric emergency plans, some already implemented, such as:

- Coordinate communications with gas utilities and telecommunication companies.
- Include procedures for coordinating electric restoration with each telecommunications company's restoration efforts during major storm events. Plans must describe the method and the means that will be used to communicate with telecommunications companies.
- Require each electric utility to provide more detailed procedures to track customers who experience flood damage to customer-owned electric equipment.
- Incorporate municipal call procedures, including the use of meeting agendas, used during events.
- Direct electric utilities to identify how energized wires are to be tracked and prioritized during an active storm and in what priority repair work related to down energized wires will be performed post storm, taking into account the potential for public harm.
- Clearly identify the methodology used to determine customer service representative staffing levels. Emergency plans must also contain detailed call center performance objectives and goals including the triggers and parameters for activating and use of third party vendor assistance in handling increased call volume.

Governor Cuomo's 2013-14 State Budget enacted significantly more stringent assessment and overview of utility activity requirements in New York. As a result, the PSC is now required to approve electric emergency response plans filed annually by electric corporations every December, and specifies subject areas to be covered in the emergency response plans. To ensure compliance with newly strengthened laws and regulations, the PSC now has the ability to initiate a civil penalty proceeding in situations where a utility has failed to file or properly implement a storm plan.

In order to protect residents and businesses throughout the current storm system, many efforts to improve utility storm preparation and response have been underway for several months. Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, the utilities have already initiated a process to improve the mutual assistance protocols, many of the flood restoration procedures have been incorporated into the plans, and improvements are underway.

Specifically, last February, PSC staff directed the utilities to describe in detail the specific temporary and permanent measures the companies were taking to harden energy distribution systems against future storm damage in preparation for this year's hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to November 30.

PSC staff also directed the utilities to incorporate flood restoration procedures; pre-emptive power shutdown procedures; improvements in social media; completion of Irene, Lee, October snowstorm recommendations; and implementation of company lessons learned from Superstorm Sandy.

In addition, last month, PSC staff provided additional direction to the utilities designed to improve mutual assistance protocols; improve identification and contacts for all

telecommunication companies within each utilities' service territory; improve coordination with local officials; and refine utility-specific wires down procedures.

In April, Governor Cuomo unveiled a new utility 'scorecard' as a way to hold utilities accountable for power restorations after a significant outage using a quantitative assessment of electric utility performance, as part of the State's efforts for more aggressive review and evaluation of utilities following Superstorm Sandy. The scorecard will help establish standards to promote effective emergency preparation and response by utilities in the restoration of power to their communities. Holding utilities accountable to such standards will ensure that they have the ability, capacity, and mindset to act quickly and effectively. The utilities will be reporting under the refined scorecard while further improvements are made.

###

Additional news available at www.governor.ny.gov
New York State | Executive Chamber | press.office@exec.ny.gov | 518.474.8418