

STATE OF NEW YORK

Public Service Commission

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PSC APPROVES ELECTRIC UTILITIES' EMERGENCY PLANS

— Amended Emergency Plans Address Issues Raised by Moreland Commission Report —

Albany, NY—03/27/14—The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved amended utility electric emergency plans, originally filed last December, that are designed for the prompt restoration of service in an emergency event involving widespread outages due to storms or other major events. The action stems from recommendations made by the Moreland Commission on Utility Storm Preparation and Response, instituted by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to investigate the electric utilities' management, preparation and response to the major storms that have affected New York State in recent years, including Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee.

“An effective emergency plan is an important tool to ensure that an electric utility can promptly and safely respond to a storm or emergency event,” said Commission Chair Audrey Zibelman. “We are satisfied that the utilities' amended emergency plans provide a framework for an appropriate response. We also expect that the utilities will properly execute these emergency plans and will continually strive to update and strengthen them to ensure the safety of customers and rapid restoration of essential electric service.”

As a result of new regulatory enforcement powers based on Moreland Commission recommendations, electric utilities are now required to file emergency plans annually by December 15 with the Commission. In response to this deadline, utilities filed their plans in December 2013. After a staff review and discussion regarding additional improvements that

could be made, the utilities submitted amended emergency plans, which build upon improvements made over the past year.

One of the key changes now incorporated into the utilities' emergency plans is the possible roles for the National Guard. Beginning in April 2013, Department staff, the electric utilities, the National Guard, and the State Office of Emergency Management (SOEM) participated in a series of meetings in which the National Guard's role in supporting restoration activities after a storm event or disaster was discussed. Based upon those successful meetings, each emergency plan now has a procedure in place that details the National Guard's capabilities and restoration support role, the process for requesting assistance, as well as how the National Guard, after meeting core obligations, will be supported, deployed and trained in the event of a major storm-related outage.

Some of the other key improvements addressed in the amended emergency plans include:

- Public safety during an emergency event is a primary concern, and one of the most hazardous situations following a storm involves energized overhead electrical wires that have fallen due to contact with trees or broken poles. The emergency plans now use consistent definitions and procedures to respond to down wire reports, which improves tracking and communications with police, fire, municipal and other emergency responders.
- Electric utilities included a section in their emergency plans dedicated to coordination with telecommunication companies including liaison procedures, mutual information sharing, responding to requests and questions, and joint storm drills. It is expected that this section of the plan will continue to evolve based on additional meetings between the entities, lessons learned following drills, and actual experiences in the event of storms.
- The emergency plans recognize the importance of assisting customers affected by widespread flooding and having protocols for restoring power. The plans also outline protocols used during isolated flooding where a relatively low number of customers are affected. All of the plans address coordination with localities, tracking impacted customers, and communicating with these customers during both types of flooding events.
- The utility emergency plans include protocols for requesting mutual assistance and deploying utility and mutual assistance crews. The scope of available mutual assistance resources was broadened through the merger of the New York Mutual Assistance Group, New England Mutual Assistance Group, and Mid-Atlantic Mutual Assistance Group into the North Atlantic Mutual Assistance Group. The plans also include a common procedure detailing the National Guard capabilities and restoration role, and requesting and deploying National Guard support.

- Estimated times of restoration (ETR) are important for consumers, municipal officials, and emergency support personnel to be able to plan properly after an event. The emergency plans include information on ETR development, accuracy, and how ETR information is communicated.
- Communications is an integral part of utility emergency restoration. Emergency plans strengthened procedures for communicating consistent, timely information to the public, elected officials, and municipal officials before and during emergency events. These procedures include the use of municipal conference calls, assignment of company liaisons to work with county Emergency Operations Centers, and training for their staff.
- Before, during and after an event, consumers contact the utility call center regarding safety concerns, outage reporting, restoration estimates, and dry ice shelter information. The amended emergency plans identify call center staffing levels and steps to be taken to assure customers are assisted throughout the event, as well as procedures to use various communications vehicles to keep the public informed during a storm event.
- All utilities have included consistent definitions and procedures regarding Life Support Equipment (LSE) and Special Needs Customers. The strengthened procedures comply with 16NYCRR Part 105 providing clearer processes to contact affected LSE customers within 24 hours of an electrical emergency, and maintaining daily contact until power is restored.

The Commission's order, when issued, may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number 13-E-0550 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number." Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission orders 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.