

STATE OF NEW YORK

# Public Service Commission

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## UTILITIES IN COMPLIANCE WITH ELECTRIC SAFETY STANDARDS — First 5-Year Cycle to Inspect Entire System-Wide Facilities Completed —

Albany, NY—06/17/10—The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today received a report from staff of the Department of Public Service (staff) concerning electric 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 the State of New York.

“Electric safety standards remain an effective means 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, publicly accessible electric transmission and distribution facilities for stray voltage, and all publicly 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 once every five years.

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.

After consideration of the comments received and staff's analysis of the 2009 test results, the Commission accepted staff's recommendation concerning mobile stray voltage scans in 2010 for cities with populations of 50,000 or more. In April, the Commission solicited comments concerning staff's recommendation that for 2010, and continuing thereafter until further Commission action, semi-annual mobile stray voltage scans be completed in Buffalo and annually in the cities of Yonkers, White Plains, Albany, Niagara Falls, Rochester, and New Rochelle.

Additionally, staff reported that manual stray voltage testing was performed on approximately 4 million transmission, distribution, and street-lighting facilities across the state in 2009. The 2009 manual test results reveal that the rate of stray voltage findings declined in all categories (e.g., streetlights, underground distribution, overhead distribution, and transmission facilities) from 2008 to 2009, most notably in the areas of overhead distribution and transmission, which experienced reductions of approximately 45 percent.

As noted by staff, utilities complied with the 100 percent inspection requirement over the last five years. Utilities achieved the target performance levels prescribed for stray voltage testing and facility inspection and did not incur any revenue adjustments 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 in Case 10-E-0273 and Commission's order in Case 10-E-0271, when issued, may be obtained by going to the Documents section of the Commission's Web site at [www.dps.state.ny.us](http://www.dps.state.ny.us) and entering the appropriate case number in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Master Number." Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission decisions can be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14<sup>th</sup> floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500).