



# Public Service Commission

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John B. Rhodes, Chair

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## **PSC Receives Reports on Electric Reliability, Customer Service, Gas and Electric Safety of the State's Large Public Utilities**

**Major Utilities Performed Well — With Exception of Con Edison — in Terms of Reliability**

**Two Major Con Edison Outages Hurt Utility's Overall Reliability Performance in 2019**

**RG&E Shareholders to Pay \$525,000 for Benefit of Customers After Missing Customer Service Quality Metrics**

**National Grid Upstate to Use \$4.48 million to Implement Gas Safety Program**

**ALBANY** — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) reviewed the state's major utilities in terms of their performance in a number of key areas in 2019, including electric reliability service, gas safety, electric safety, and customer service.

"While most utilities are doing a good job providing safe and reliable service, three utilities have fallen short of our expectations in certain areas and we will continue to act aggressively to ensure utilities improve performance," **said Commission Chair John B. Rhodes.** "Additionally, as a result of this analysis, it is clear that utilities must be ready to address more frequent and powerful storms."

**Electric Reliability:** The Commission relies on two primary metrics to measure electric performance: System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI or frequency) and the Customer Average Interruption Duration Index (CAIDI or duration). By compiling the interruption data provided by the individual utilities, the average frequency and duration of interruptions can be reviewed to assess the overall reliability of electric service statewide.

Excluding major storms, the statewide interruption frequency for 2019 is the same as last year and the statewide five-year average. The statewide interruption duration was longer than last year and the statewide five-year average. The most significant events influencing reliability performance excluding major storms were two significant outages Con Edison incurred during the summer of 2019. The statewide interruption duration, excluding Con Edison, was the same last year indicating the effect Con Edison had on the statewide duration. Department staff continues to investigate the Manhattan and Brooklyn outage events.

**Electric Safety:** New York utilities were in compliance with electric safety standards in 2019. The Commission established these standards in 2005 to safeguard the public from exposure to stray voltage and to identify and eliminate potentially harmful conditions before serious safety hazards and/or reliability deficiencies develop. New York's electric safety standards continue to have some of the most stringent requirements when compared to other states across the nation. In 2019, manual stray voltage testing was performed on approximately one million utility facilities statewide, resulting in the identification of only 302 stray voltage conditions, all of which were quickly remediated. In addition, the utilities also performed mobile scans in major cities and all stray voltage findings from those surveys were remediated.

**Gas Safety:** Department staff evaluated critical areas of gas safety, including damage prevention, emergency response times, leak management, and non-compliances identified through staff's audit process. Overall, the data indicates that performance has substantially improved since these metrics have been in place, due largely to an increase in requests to mark-out buried pipes before digging began and a decrease in the total number of damages.

The total year-end leak backlog improved roughly 14.1 percent from the previous calendar year. Both the total number of leaks discovered, and leaks repaired declined substantially. Overall, the data indicates that performance has substantially improved for utilities across the state over the 17-year period staff has been reporting performance. As utilities continue their outreach efforts, adopt better practices in responding to leak, odor, and emergency reports, and work to replace leak-prone infrastructure, staff expects further performance improvements will occur.

In a separate action, the Commission authorized National Grid's upstate division to use \$4.48 million to implement a gas safety program. Specifically, the money will be used for an additional 64,800 residential methane detectors for homeowners and 266 remote methane leak detection devices, which will be distributed fire departments.

**Customer Service:** Most of the State's utilities met or exceeded the standards for performance on measures of customer service established within their respective rate plans. Rochester Gas & Electric incurred negative revenue adjustments for failing to meet its calls answered in 30 seconds target and estimated meter reads target. As a result, RG&E shareholders will have to pay \$525,000 for the benefit of RG&E customers.

The reports in these proceedings, may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at [www.dps.ny.gov](http://www.dps.ny.gov) and entering the following Case Numbers in the input box labeled "Search by Case Number": Electric Reliability Performance (20-E-0045); Electric Safety (20-E-0098); Gas Safety (20-G-0195); National Grid gas safety (17-G-0239); and Customer Service (20-M-0046). Commission documents 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. For more information, you may also visit your service provider's website.