



Actions on Storm-Related Electricity Outages

Chairman Robert F. Powelson • Vice Chairman John F. Coleman Jr. • Commissioners Wayne E. Gardner, James H. Cawley and Pamela A. Witmer
June Perry, Director of Legislative Affairs • 717-787-3256 • Tom Charles, Director of Communications • 717-787-9504 • www.puc.state.pa.us

In response to the weather related outages this year, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) has undertaken a series of actions designed to better understand the specific circumstances of the electricity outages experienced by hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvania households and businesses. It is hoped with these very specific actions that the total number and duration of future outages will be reduced and that related communications with consumers will be improved. The PUC takes each storm incident seriously and will continue to make changes to our regulations as appropriate.

We appreciate a discussion of the performance of electric utilities, as well as any other utilities that we regulate – especially during these types of events that we have recently experienced. The following is a rundown of our major (or more notable) actions related to the long-term outages:

Storm Response Meetings:

- Held a Special Electric Reliability Forum on October 12, 2011 with affected utilities where participants discussed what worked and what did not work during the Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee outages.
- Convened all affected utilities for post-storm assessments of responses to each storm.
- Conducted its annual electric distribution company (EDC) emergency coordinators committee on November 29, 2011 at PEMA.
- Partnered with the Energy Association of Pennsylvania to initiate an industry best practices committee meeting on November 29, 2011 in conjunction with the emergency coordinators meeting at PEMA.

Drills and Exercises:

- Participated in PPL Electric's emergency operations tabletop exercise on December 12, 2011. PUC Emergency Preparedness staff plans to participate in additional utility and PEMA drills during the spring of 2012.

Regulatory:

- Finalized revised regulations on Sept. 22, 2011, that are designed to improve service outage response and restoration practices. These regulations revised 52 Pa. Code Chapters 57, 59, 65 and 67.
- Issued a policy statement on Dec. 15, 2011, that addressed best practices that utilities should utilize to ensure effective communication during service outages. This policy statement touched on topics such as the use of social media and new technology to keep customers informed.

Data and Reports:

- Evaluated required reports from utilities affected by Hurricane Irene, Tropical Storm Lee and the October snowstorm.
- Requested additional information from EDCs to support and clarify the reports required following Hurricane Irene, Tropical Storm Lee and the October snowstorm.
- Directed EDCs to provide detailed information on outages on specific circuits over the past six months, including information on whether they were among their worst-performing 5 percent of circuits; on outage restoration for any outages over 24 hours; and on any corrective actions regarding the circuits that experienced outage of over 24 hours.
- Directed all EDCs to submit information on historic weather information and customer call center/ interactive voice response system improvement plans.

Future actions:

- Provide an analysis of the utility response and lessons learned associated with last year's utility storm response, an understanding of historical and projected severe weather trends, and information on the last customers restored in each of those storms last year.
- Incorporate additional discussion and action items regarding EDC major event response into the annual PUC Electric Reliability Report issued in June of each year.
- Work with the University of Florida's Public Utility Research Center to secure a partnership regarding storm hardening and storm recovery, with the intention of incorporating the university's expertise into the industry best practices committee.

The PUC continues to evaluate the data that is being provided by the EDCs. Our top finding, to date, is that customer communication during outages is an ongoing issue with the electric utilities. We remain committed to working to ensure safe, reliable, affordable utility service for customers and will continue to conduct our evaluations in a manner that will yield constructive results.

For further information, contact the Public Utility Commission:

Write

PA Public Utility Commission
Bureau of Consumer Services
P.O. Box 3265
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

Call

1-800-692-7380
For people with speech
or hearing loss, dial 7-1-1
(Telecommunications Relay
Service)

Visit our website

www.puc.state.pa.us

