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**PRESS RELEASE**

 Date: Nov. 6, 2009

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**PUC Initiates Rulemaking Process, Proposes Policy Statement to Improve Responses to Large-Scale Service Outages**

HARRISBURG – The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) today initiated a rulemaking and proposed a policy statement in order to improve utility response to large-scale service outages.

The Commission voted 4-0 to begin the rulemaking process to amend existing regulations regarding service outages and reportable accidents. The Commission also proposed a policy statement designed to provide guidance to the industry regarding the types of public notice necessary. Commission Vice Chairman Tyrone J. Christy and Commissioner Kim Pizzingrilli issued joint statements on the proposed [rulemaking](http://www.puc.state.pa.us/general/pdf/Comm-SM/Joint_Stmt_Pizzingrilli_Christy_LAW2104274_110609.pdf) and proposed policy [statement](http://www.puc.state.pa.us/general/pdf/Comm-SM/Joint_Stmt_policystmt_Pizzingrilli_Christy_LAW2104274_110609.pdf).

**Proposed** **Rulemaking**

The goal of the rulemaking is to have even more effective responses to future unscheduled outages. The proposed amendments address:

* Accidents involving injury for the electric, natural gas, water and wastewater industries;
* Service outages;
* The ability to capture more reportable events, such as cyber security attacks and events that involved damages to a utility company by another utility company;
* Deadlines for reporting accidents;
* The expansion of provisions regarding reporting service outages to include sustained outages; and
* Reports to track the number of utility workers, contract and mutual aid works assigned to repair work.

Interested parties have 30 days from publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* to file comments.

**Policy Statement**

The proposed policy statement is intended to establish guidelines for how the utilities should communicate with the public during outages to ensure that actual, timely notice to customers is provided. The proposed policy statement contains a series of acceptable methods for improving the timeliness and effectiveness of notice to customers during an outage.

The proposed policy statement applies to electric distribution utilities. However, the Commission is seeking comment on whether the policy statement should apply to natural gas, water and wastewater as well.

The proposed policy statement is designed to:

* Establish acceptable forms of notification to reflect technological advances;
* Have the utilities strive to adopt the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and its public information system;
* Ensure crisis communications plans are in writing and consistent with NIMS; and
* Encourage utilities to work across geographic regions if applicable.

Interested parties have 30 days from publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* to comment. Reply comments are due in 45 days.

On Sept. 25, 2008, the Commission initiated a statewide evaluation of EDC storm response tactics, including their power restoration practices and customer communications. The action followed residual storms from Hurricane Ike on Sept. 14 and 15, 2008, that mixed with a cold front to produce winds up to 80 mph in Western Pennsylvania that caused damage to the area’s electric distribution system and left more than 450,000 customers without power. For some, power was not restored until Sept. 22, 2008.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission balances the needs of consumers and utilities to ensure safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates; protect the public interest; educate consumers to make independent and informed utility choices; further economic development; and foster new technologies and competitive markets in an environmentally sound manner. For recent news releases, audio of select Commission proceedings or more information about the PUC, visit our website at [www.puc.state.pa.us](http://www.puc.state.pa.us/).

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