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| PUC logo | COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIAPENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSIONP.O. BOX 3265, HARRISBURG, PA 17105-3265 | **IN REPLY PLEASE REFER TO OUR FILE** |

**PRESS RELEASE**

 Date: Sept. 22, 2011

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**PUC Finalizes Rulemaking Designed to Improve Utility Outage Responses**

HARRISBURG – The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) today approved a final rulemaking designed to improve utility responses to large-scale outages.

The Commission voted 5-0 to amend existing regulations regarding service outages and reportable accidents. Commission Chairman Robert F. Powelson and Vice Chairman John F. Coleman Jr. issued a [joint statement](http://www.puc.state.pa.us/general/pdf/Comm-SM/Joint_Mot_Powelson_Coleman_LAW2104274_092211.pdf). The goal of the rulemaking is to have even more effective responses to unscheduled outages for electric, natural gas, water, wastewater and telephone utilities and establish a uniform approach for reporting standards among industries in the event of utility service outages.

“We urge all cities and municipalities to coordinate large-scale utility terminations with the PUC and PEMA through the State Emergency Operations Center,” said Chairman Powelson and Vice Chairman Coleman. “It is imperative that both residential and business customers receive adequate notice of such terminations; had such coordination taken place the Commission could have worked with the utilities to ensure this notice occurred. Additionally, the PUC and PEMA need such utility outage information for response and planning purposes.”

The amendments to the regulations address:

* Accidents involving injury for the electric, natural gas, water and wastewater industries;
* Service outages;
* The ability to capture more reportable events, such as physical or cyber security attacks;
* Deadlines for reporting accidents;
* The expansion of provisions regarding reporting service outages to include the number of customers interrupted during the event, the number of outage cases and trouble cases for each county affected , and the number of outages exceeding 6 hours in duration ; and
* Reports to track the number of utility workers, contract and mutual aid workers assigned to repair work.

 The rulemaking now goes to the state’s Independent Regulatory Review Commission for consideration.

The PUC also will hold a [Special Electric Reliability Forum](http://www.puc.state.pa.us/General/press_releases/Press_Releases.aspx?ShowPR=2845) from 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 12, 2011, to hear from the state’s electric utilities whose distribution systems were affected by Hurricane Irene. The special forum will address pre-planning as Hurricane Irene approached the east coast as well as communications with customers and efforts to restore service during and after the storm.

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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