

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17120

John Lavelly v. West Penn Power Company

Public Meeting – February 12, 2015
2408502 - ALJ
Docket No. C-2014-2408502

STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER PAMELA A. WITMER

Before the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) today for disposition is the Complaint of John Lavelly (Complainant) against West Penn Power Company (West Penn). The Complainant alleges that electricity for his rental properties was interrupted for about eight hours, resulting in frozen pipes and other damages.

First, I am in full agreement with the decision of Administrative Law Judge Jeffrey A. Watson dismissing the Complaint. West Penn, like most utilities, does not and frankly cannot guarantee perfect electric service. In this case, the record evidence shows that the Company made all reasonable efforts to reestablish service to the Complainant's properties as quickly as possible given the circumstances. Those circumstances are important to highlight.

The Complainant's outage occurred on January 6, 2014, the beginning of last year's polar vortex. High winds and extreme temperatures brought the Complainant's sub-transmission line down. At the time the temperatures were about 20 degrees below zero. The weather event was not only the cause of the outage however. These temperatures were the conditions in which West Penn linemen had to work to restore power. And they did so in less than eight hours.

We all rely on electricity on a daily basis for everything from heat to charging our omnipresent smartphones. Many times, we take the service for granted, but the impacts of an outage can range from mild inconvenience to life threatening. However, it is also important to recognize that the provision of electricity and frankly all utility service requires a dedicated workforce of men and women who brave all types of weather and conditions to ensure that the lights stay on, the water is running and the phone works.

As we are in the middle of another cold winter, this case serves as a reminder of exactly what Pennsylvania's utility workers are subjected to in order to get the job done. I thank them for their service and hope that they stay safe.

DATE: February 12, 2015


PAMELA A. WITMER
COMMISSIONER