

**Testimony before the  
Tropical Storm Irene Legislative Hearing**

**19 September 2011**

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**Town of Killingworth**

Killingworth is a small town, and we are pretty self-sufficient. Other towns had more extensive damage than we did. We knew we would not get power back quickly if Irene hit us. We prepared. Our volunteer fire company and our road crew were standing ready. And CL&P assured us that it was ready, that "a comprehensive plan" was in place and that they were in "close contact" with us.

Looking back on the messages we got before the storm is a bit like remembering what your Lamaze teacher told you, after you've given birth. "At this stage, you will experience a little more discomfort."

The fact is, communications with CL&P were abysmal. Even if we didn't have power, we did need to make sure our roads were open in case of emergency, and over 60 of our 102 roads were blocked by fallen trees and downed wires—some in several places. We needed CL&P's help to make sure that lines were not live so that we could clear the roads. But CL&P did not seem to know where its own crews were. For two days

we could not make arrangements for their crews to work with our own highway department.

At one point, I called about a transformer that was down and leaking, and I was told to call the special Spill Line. I did, and guys in hazmat suits showed up at the site. But they said that they couldn't do anything because access was still blocked, and they went away. You can imagine how that made the neighbors feel. Yet there seemed to be no direct communication between CL&P's spill team and its clearing teams. When I pressed, I was asked, "Well, is this one of your priorities?"

After a couple of days, our townspeople really wanted to know when they could expect power back. I simply could not get information to share with them. On the long Wednesday afternoon conference call convened by Congressman Courtney, Bill Quindlen from CL&P made some predictions that were laughably off base, but the people we were dealing with on a local level didn't even seem to have heard those forecasts.

CL&P boasted of its local liaison program. I have to say, first, we never heard about that program before the storm; second, the liaison assigned to us on Tuesday was unable to get answers to any of our questions; and third, she did not seem to understand the system, our locality, or her role in a way that would have allowed her to be an effective advocate for us. From Killingworth's perspective, this local liaison program did *not* demonstrate serious advance planning on CL&P's part.

Let it be said that we had a drastic communications system failure in our area. ATT's cell phone towers did not have back-up generators and stopped working on

Sunday morning. Many of the local landlines didn't work without power. Comcast failed as well. This brings me to my final point: there should be direct and immediate communication among these utilities. In this day and age, electronic communications are fundamental, and these large, well-paid corporations should have a plan in place, together, to keep us functioning. Instead, they seemed to be communicating through me. Comcast called to ask me—through the Verizon phone I had borrowed—to put their tower on the town priority list. I was eager to do whatever I could to get things moving, but this seems ridiculous to me: surely CL&P and ATT and Comcast have the resources to coordinate a more efficient response.

In the end, all of Killingworth had power restored 8 days after the storm. That means that, for 8 days, almost all of Killingworth was without water as well as electricity, since we get our water from individual deep wells. Our main hub—containing our town hall, the main fire house, the ambulance corps, two schools, the transfer station, and 300 units of senior housing, did not get power back until Thursday night. Once that happened, we were able to organize a community dinner on 24 hours notice. We learned a lot of lessons from Irene, but overall, I'm proud of the way our community responded to Irene. Our utilities need to learn their lessons as well. We must demand a much improved response from them next time around.