



THE OLD STONE HOUSE

TOWN OF GUILFORD

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To: Melissa Buckley
Assistant Legislative Director
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From: First Selectman Joseph Mazza
Town of Guilford

RE: Tropical Storm Irene Hearing Response to Questions

Tropical Storm Irene Hearing Questions

Municipalities

- Communication

At the beginning of the storm, and during the initial clean-up phases, communication with CL&P was poor. Communication improved when we were assigned a Coordinator from CL&P who was stationed at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and attended our daily briefings throughout the week. However, it was disappointing that the communication between the Coordinator and Operational Supervisors at CL&P was poor. It was only after receiving a direct phone number to the Special Operations Chief for this incident that the Town was able to receive better information. Direct contact with the supervisor was very helpful in conveying to CL&P what our concerns were and what their work schedules were for each day.

What can be improved and what was frustrating to the EOC team, was that Town Officials were not able communicate to residents and businesses what areas of town were affected by what circuits, hence we had no idea when various areas of town would be coming back on line.

- Reverse 911

The Reverse 911 system was very effective for communicating to our residents and businesses who had phone service or had registered their cell phones with the system. We used this system to communicate mandatory evacuation orders, and after the storm we used the system on several occasions to advise residents of town services and clean-up information.

- Preparation

Prior to the storm, a Pre-Disaster Emergency Management meeting was held. The Emergency Shelter was opened, and the Town contracted with tree and brush removal companies and excavators to be available for storm clean-up. The Town alerted citizens about the pending storm, and produced an informational video, which aired on community television, to help prepare for the storm and advise about services that would be available.

Emergency Services departments cancelled all vacation and personal time, and all personnel were put on 12 hour shifts. The EOC opened on Saturday morning before the storm.

Guilford was fortunate in that we did not have any fatalities. However, there was damage and loss of property due to the storm. Emergency Services Departments, especially Fire and Ambulance, responded to medical calls and a structure fire. During the response to the structure fire, one fire truck was damaged by a falling tree and was trapped. The Fire Department crew had to wait for a CL&P crew to de-energize the lines before they could remove the tree and cut their way through. Guilford is grateful to the Town of North Branford for responding to the fire and extinguishing it, while Guilford's crew was waiting for the tree to be removed and the road to be cleared.

The Town of Guilford experienced a 100% power outage as a result of the storm. We did not have full restoration until eight days later. During this period all emergency services buildings and shelters operated on generator.

At the suggestion of our Emergency Operations Manager, we requested that CL&P provide the town with a crew that could ground the wires, which would then enable us to perform the task of cutting through trees and making roads accessible at a quicker pace rather than waiting for a CL&P public safety line crew.

The protocol issued to CL&P was to first clear all major arteries of downed wires, trees and debris so that emergency vehicles could respond to calls. Then we required that emergency services buildings had their power restored, then major commercial areas (such as Route 1) were made the next priority. Thereafter school buildings were to be energized, followed by residential neighborhoods.

The overall frustration we as a town government faced was not being able to inform our citizens when their power would be restored, in what neighborhoods crews were working, and also not being able to communicate effectively about services the town offered to help relieve their burdens during the storm.

All in all, our citizens came together and helped one another and showed their resilience during the situation. We as a town are addressing the areas of concern; such as communicating effectively with our residents, and receiving a quicker response and more detailed information from the utilities, including AT&T and Comcast.

I wish to thank all of our State and Federal officials who helped during the crisis, particularly our Congressional delegation, our State delegation, the Lieutenant Governor, and the National Guard. I also want to comment that once I had direct contact with operational management at CL&P, the service and communication greatly improved, and I thank them for all their efforts in getting Guilford back in service.

Joseph S. Mazza
First Selectman,
Town of Guilford