

**Tropical Storm Irene Hearing Questions
Responses by the Third Taxing District of the City of Norwalk**

Utility Companies

- Preparation
 - What are the best practices for readiness? Response?
 - A. To prepare for an event it is important to have a comprehensive plan and to follow that plan. Response requires good field intelligence in order to prioritize restoration efforts.
 - How did you fare for readiness? Response?
 - A. Because of the advanced warning we were well prepared for the storm with the exception of arranging outside help since all utilities in the region were preparing for their own problems. We were able to respond quickly but the storm related outages began earlier than we had expected.
 - What was the damage from Tropical Storm Irene? How many lines were affected? How many customers were affected?
 - A. We experienced little wind or flooding damage to our electric system but most damage was from broken trees. Main distribution lines were down in eight locations; secondary lines were down in sixteen locations; and we had another 23 single services either down or out of service. A total of about 500 customers were out of power during and following the storm. The last customers were restored by 2:30 PM Monday 8/29. We spent until 3:30 on 8/30 on clean up not requiring service restoration.
 - What was the extent of your disaster preparedness plan? Please provide details.
 - Were we prepared for a category 1 hurricane?
 - A. Our disaster plan is general in nature but does contemplate wind and ice storms more than other less frequent events such as flooding. Because of the storm predictions we were prepared for a category 1 storm.
 - What damage could have been done?
 - A. Stronger winds, a preceding soaking rain, or more serious tidal flooding could have easily doubled the problems that we experienced.
 - Where/how could we have done better?
 - A. We will recategorize our outage reporting into fewer groups. Generally we feel that our systems performed very well.
 - What lessons did you learn?
 - A. There needs to be strong emphasis on customer feedback so that effected customers can plan. This is our biggest challenge.

- What are your standards in regards to tree trimming? Have these standards changed over the past 10 years?
 - A. We trim on a three year rotating schedule with special attention as needed.
 - A. The only change is that the city has adopted an ordinance governing tree trimming which adds a small administrative burden but has not reduced the effectiveness of our trimming.
- Staffing/Labor
 - How many line crews were deployed during peak restoration?
 - A. One line crew and one tree contractor crew with support from other operating personnel.
 - How many line crews were brought in from other places, if any?
 - A. No outside crews were used.
 - How many line crews are employed by your company now vs. 2000?
 - A. One crew but we now have two lineworkers rather than the previous three.
 - What are your policies/standards regarding hours of work (hours/shift)?
 - A. We work 16 hours per day with an eight hour rest (10 PM-6 AM.)
- Communication
 - How was the communication between your company and municipalities?
 - What worked? What didn't?
 - How could this communication be improved?
 - A. We participate in the City of Norwalk disaster preparedness planning. They provided excellent information on the storm forecast and arranged shelter for storm victims. There was little need for communication between us during or after the storm.
 - How was the communication between your company and your customers?
 - What worked? What didn't?
 - A. Customer communication was very good, especially in receiving customer calls. We had sufficient personnel on duty to answer most calls as they came in and very few customers reported getting a busy signal.
 - How could this communication be improved?
 - A. The perennial problem in large outages is providing an estimated time of restoration to the customer. This is impossible in the early stages since additional problems are likely to occur and it is also difficult predicting restoration time after the storm because so many elements are beyond our control, such as tree clearing.