

September 17, 2011

Energy and Technology Committee

Public Safety and Security Committee

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Planning and Development Committee

Re: "State's Readiness for, and Response to Tropical Storm Irene"

To Whom It May Concern:

Veteran legislators know that historically, when unusual weather occurs in Connecticut resulting in significant outages for several days, the service is eventually restored; hearings are held; and the utility companies make few modifications.

Senior management, in striving for the "bottom line," maintain employee and crew levels at a minimum; keep inventories of equipment as low as possible; and promote themselves as striving to keep consumer costs down.

I suspect that many of the so-called managers are encouraged to not focus on system issues on the philosophy of "continuous improvement," but rather on maintaining that bottom line.

Thus, when major storms occur, the utility companies are not prepared to respond efficiently and effectively by not properly maintaining and enhancing:

- communication procedures between: call centers and dispatch's management of crews; state and local governments and utility crews and activities; and the utilities and the general public
- equipment maintenance, and
- tree trimming activities.

In addition, management appears reluctant to commit the necessary funds ahead of time to ensure that sufficient numbers of out-of-state crews will be contracted with to minimize the time required to begin restoration work.

(2)

Example

In East Hampton, well prior to the storm, two individuals were arrested for stealing copper ground wires from telephone poles with transformers on several streets.

C.L.&P did not (and has not to my knowledge) quickly replace these ground wires creating a risk factor to the general public and line crews.

Five (5) full days after the storm, one home owner had power restored only to have to call the Fire Department because the C.L.&P. equipment and/or lack of proper grounding caused electricity to ground in the individual's underground cable wire which melted at the house and could have caused a house fire.

A C.L.&P. crew was ordered by the Fire Department and power was immediately shut off for three or more homeowners. They were told a crew would be out the next day to replace the transformer and ensure that the grounding wire was fixed.

The homeowner made numerous calls to the utility company and received conflicting and untrue information. The power was restored several days later.

This one example raises issues regarding the management of our utility system and should be carefully reviewed from a regulatory point-of-view.

Sincerely,



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