



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE BRENDA L. KUPCHICK  
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MEMBER  
BANKS COMMITTEE  
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HOUSING COMMITTEE

**Testimony:**  
**Energy and Technology, Public Safety, Labor and Planning and  
Development Committees  
Joint Public Hearing  
Regarding the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene  
Monday, September 26, 2011**

Irene was the most significant storm Connecticut residents have experienced in a long time. Over 50% of the state lost power, with Fairfield losing power to over 16,000 homes. Many residents suffered damage to their homes and businesses, while other lost their homes.

There were over a 100 power lines down through out Fairfield. Our town's Police, Fire, emergency services people and the Department of Public Works did an admirable job. The town set up a shelter, sent out emergency notifications through the 911 reverse system, distributed water, batteries, and other essentials.

From my communication with my first selectman, emergency responders, UI, and my constituents through the storm and after a common theme seemed to surface.

Communication was a big issue. Reverse 911 calls came through the town, but the town needs better information to share. Improved communication between the utility companies, outside contractors, Police, Fire and Department of Public works.

Stories about contractors waiting hours for work orders is concerning. It appeared better planning, accurate communication and a plan of action is fundamental during a crisis. From the hearings on September 19th many of the company leaders admitted they need to do better

As the public hearing continued it was clear there was at least a two to three day delay before serious action was taken.

Procedures and protocols, as well as communication between the utility's home office, town officials, first responders and line crews needs improvement – particularly, when there was enough lead time provided by weather forecasters.

Once crews were deployed from within Connecticut and as far away as Nevada and Missouri things started to finally happen.

The proper systems should be put in place in the following areas;

- Better real time communication protocols between towns and utilities,
- Roads being cleared must be a priority so that emergency responders can reach residents in an emergency.
- Technology upgrades should be created- model Fed EX or UPS systems to track outage updates,
- Prioritize homes that are on septic systems versus well water,
- Recognize vulnerable populations- the elderly and sick,
- Ease utility restrictions on where trees can be pre-trimmed.

I have attached e-mails from constituents who couldn't attend today's hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Brenda L. Kupchick 132<sup>nd</sup> district, Fairfield & Southport.

-----Original Message-----

From: Tetreau, Mike

Sent: Sun 9/4/2011 10:00 AM

To: 'Mindy Kloster'

Cc: Rep. Kupchick, Brenda

Subject: RE: Still no power!

Very sorry to hear you are still out...here is the latest update from UI..as of Sunday morning

Mike,

As of this morning we are down to around 900 customers still out in Fairfield. We will have a very strong push to get all of those back today. In addition to a contingent of UI crews, we have contract crews, and crews from Kansas City Power & Light working to restore in your town.

While we had the "most crews" in Fairfield last night (4-2 man crews), we could not complete the largest remaining outages because someone stole our wire. Because of this, we redirected those crews to smaller outages within the town. I believe that we have reported this incident with your police department, but I wanted you to be aware of it.

Thanks for your patience.

Tony

Michael Tetreau  
First Selectman  
Town of Fairfield  
725 Old Post Road  
Fairfield, CT 06824  
203-256-3030  
[www.fairfieldct.org](http://www.fairfieldct.org)

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From: Mindy [REDACTED]  
Sent: Sunday, September 04, 2011 9:50 AM  
To: Tetreau, Mike  
Subject: Fwd: Still no power!

[REDACTED]  
I have sent this to Congressman Jim Himes as well. We need help out here!  
Sent from my iPhone

From: Mindy  
Date: September 4, 2011 9:40:58 AM EDT  
To: "Rep. Brenda Kupchick"  
Subject: Still no power!

Dear Brenda Kupchick,  
I am still without power and feel as if I am forgotten. I am so frustrated with UI telling me it is because so many trees are down. Our tree that took out our power line has been cleared

and removed since Tuesday by the town of Fairfield. There are 4 houses here on Woody Lane in the cul de sac that are dark even though our whole neighborhood has been with power since Wednesday. This is becoming cruel and almost suspicious of more sinister practices by UI. My whole family is depressed!

I beg of you to use your resources to help us!

Sincerely,

Mindy

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael  
Sent: Fri 9/2/2011 2:38 PM  
To: Rep. Kupchick, Brenda  
Subject: RE: Update

Thanks for following up..

We are on Shadowood Rd. and still have no power...

A big part of our frustration is that they have been saying the same thing to me for the past three days - 'crews are working and power should be on shortly'...if they had been more accurate my wife and four kids would have left days ago.

I understand the magnitude of the storm and sure they are using all their resources but it is one telephone pole and some wires that came down on Round Hill and everyone else in the area already has power (including the University and Riverfield school)...it just seems like getting power back up and running after working on it for four days would be reasonable..I don't think this like putting back together the space shuttle or something. Why not work through the night and just get it done?...we seem to be one of the only spots left without power besides the Beach area, including Greenfield Hill which had much more extensive tree damage?

Again, maybe I am underestimating the extent of the damage that happened to these specific wires (apparently something that has never been encountered before), but have their call centers be able to communicate that to us and explain what is going on...

I understand UI is now 'guaranteeing' by Sunday all power will be back...I'm skeptical, and really what is the difference, we are still beholden to this company for our electricity needs no matter what their incompetence.

Sorry for ranting...just frustrated

Thanks

Mike

Michael

From: Rep. Kupchick, Brenda  
Sent: Friday, September 02, 2011 2:05 PM  
To: Michael  
Subject: Update

Mike,  
I just received word that Round Hill is still blocked but UI and DPW are working there today.  
Let me know if your power is restored when you get home from work.

Representative Brenda L.Kupchick  
132nd Assembly District  
800/842-1423

From: Michael  
Sent: Thursday, September 01, 2011 11:11 AM  
To: zRepresentative Brenda Kupchick  
Subject: RE: Update on Power Restoration and Useful Resources in Irene's Aftermath

Thanks for the update..

We all realize the severity of the storm damage but the efforts from the utilities, particularly UI seem completely inadequate under the circumstances

Essentially they had almost a week ahead of time to prepare as forecasters warned of extensive damage, instead the magnitude of the hurricane wasn't as bad predicted and yet, power outages are at record levels with no end in sight...what would have happened if Irene was worse than expected???....where is the accountability?

As a UI customer I am amazed that I have yet to see a truck near our house off Round Hill and the road remains shut down five days later...according to their website, Fairfield has only recovered around 50% of outages, while most other towns have closer to 80-90%....why the discrepancy?

I guess we should all just smile and continue to accept the annual utility rate increases despite the horrendous customer service & performance....I am not aware of many other industries could get away with this business model

Frustrated in Fairfield,

Mike