



Actions on Storm-Related Electricity Outages

(Updated December 20, 2011)

Chairman Robert F. Powelson • Vice Chairman John F. Coleman Jr. • Commissioners Wayne E. Gardner, James H. Cawley and Pamela A. Witmer
June Perry, Director of Legislative Affairs • 717-787-3256 • Tom Charles, Director of Communications • 717-787-9504 • www.puc.state.pa.us

In response to the weather related outages this year, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission has undertaken a series of actions designed to better understand the specific circumstances of the electricity outages experienced by hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvania households and businesses. It is hoped with these very specific actions that the total number and duration of future outages will be reduced, and that related communications with consumers will be improved. The PUC takes each storm incident seriously and will continue to make changes to our regulations as appropriate.

We appreciate a discussion of the performance of electric utilities, as well as any other utilities that we regulate – especially during these types of events that we have recently experienced. The following is a rundown of our major (or more notable) actions related to the long-term outages:

- Received and evaluated required reports from affected utilities regarding outages
- Requested and received additional information to assist in the evaluation of Hurricane Irene/Tropical Storm Lee/October snowstorm
- Met with all affected utilities for a post-storm assessment of response
- Finalized additional regulations on Sept. 22, 2011, designed to improve utility responses to outages
- Held Special Electric Reliability Forum on Oct. 12 with affected utilities where we discussed what worked and what did not work during the Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee outages
- Requested and received information from all electric distribution companies (EDCs) on historic weather information and customer call center/interactive voice response system improvement plans
- Directed EDCs to provide detailed information on outages on specific circuits over the past six months, including information on whether they were among their worst-performing 5 percent of circuits; on outage restoration for any outages over 24 hours; and on any corrective actions regarding the circuits that experienced outage of over 24 hours
- Finalized a policy statement on best practices that electric utilities should utilize to ensure effective communication during service outages, including the use of social media and new technology to keep customers informed
- Contacted the University of Florida for assistance on storm hardening and storm recovery, based on a letter sent to Governor
- Made plans to incorporate sections into the annual PUC Electric Reliability Report that discuss EDC major event response and our evaluation of such
- Met with the EDC emergency coordinators committee and EDC best practices sharing committee
- Participated in emergency planning drills and tabletop exercises

The PUC continues to evaluate the data that is being provided by the EDCs. Our top finding to date is that customer communication during outages is an ongoing issue with the electric utilities. With three major storms in eight weeks (Hurricane Irene/Tropical Storm Lee/October snow storm), we recognize the utilities have had limited time to implement many of the identified changes. We remain committed to working to ensure safe, reliable, affordable utility service for customers and will continue to conduct our evaluations in a manner that will yield constructive results.