



# New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Christie Administration Announces Pilot Program to Focus on the Risks Hazardous Trees outside the Utility Right-of-way have on Reliable Electric Service**

TRENTON, N.J. - Today, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) announced a joint vegetation management pilot program with the goal of minimizing the impact on reliable electric service due to hazardous trees located on private and public property that lie outside the electric distribution companies right-of way. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, the NJBPU in conjunction with the New Jersey League of Municipalities, Public Service Electric & Gas (PSE&G) and Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L) developed a partnership in an effort to reduce the number of tree-related outages and to increase the reliability of the overhead distribution systems.

Superstorm Sandy caused extensive damage to New Jersey's energy infrastructure, leaving 2.8 million people without power in New Jersey alone. The Christie Administration has already taken significant steps to harden utility infrastructure and improve the resilience of critical facilities. This vegetation management pilot program is another effort to reduce both the number and duration of outages caused from fallen unhealthy trees that are beyond the area in which the electric distribution companies (EDCs) can legally trim as part of their regular tree trimming programs.

"After the devastation caused by Superstorm Sandy, the Christie Administration made it a priority to rebuild utility infrastructure stronger and more resilient to withstand the effects of future storms," said Richard S. Mroz, President of the BPU. "By working in unison with the New Jersey League of Municipalities, PSE&G, JCP&L and seven volunteer towns, we are developing a plan to prevent one of the major causes of power outages, fallen trees and limbs that are not covered under the traditional vegetation management programs."

The pilot program allows JCP&L, PSE&G and the participating municipalities – East Windsor, Blairstown, Millstone, Freehold, Little Ferry, North Haledon and Garwood – to each identify between ten and twenty trees that qualify as "hazard trees." A hazard tree is a structurally unsound tree on or off the right-of-way that could strike electric supply lines when it fails.

The towns and EDCs have met and created a common list of hazard trees that need to be removed as part of the pilot program. Under the program, municipal officials are responsible to contact and make arrangements directly with the property owner, after which PSE&G and JCP&L are responsible for

removal of the hazard tree, stump grinding and debris removal. The pilot program calls for replacement trees to be planted in order to preserve the benefits of a healthy tree to property owners. Municipalities and property owners can use vouchers provided by the EDC's to replace the trees with ones that will not pose a threat to power lines and that are appropriate for the given area.

The pilot program is expected to run through the end of May 2015, after which lessons learned will be evaluated by the Board.