



Austin J. Ashley  
Councilman

# Borough of New Milford

930 River Road, New Milford, NJ 07646  
(201) 967-5044  
Fax (201) 262-7967

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## “Comment on EDC storm prep and response EO11090543”

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on what actions and/or measures the Board should take to ensure that the EDCs are as prepared and responsive as possible should future weather events of this same magnitude recur.

1. Vegetation Management- In the BPU’s 12/14/11 (Hurricane Irene Electric Responses Report) recommendations regarding vegetation management, the BPU recommends contacting municipalities and discouraging the planting of borough shade trees. This is a poor response to a major problem. Boroughs have limited locations to plant shade trees and it is fundamentally unfair to residents of homes which have the electric line right-of-way. The BPU should support cooperation between EUP and the boroughs to ensure proper tree management. Tree planting should be supported by the BPU to lessen the burden on the electrical system in the summer months.

In the “Performance Review of the EDCs” prepared by Emergency Preparedness Partnerships, the following is stated;

*“EDCs have certified arborists who work with communities to ensure trimming and clearing is performed and to encourage the planting of appropriate tree species. EDC vegetation management best practices includes analyzing previous storm damage data to identify particularly vulnerable areas, vigilant surveying of lines to discover and remediate at-risk areas, and a budget sufficient to execute preventive trimming and clearing. It is particularly important for EDCs to implement effective community relations efforts to deal with local objections to trimming and clearing based on aesthetic concerns.”*

This is not happening. Boroughs are rarely notified of tree work being performed by EDCs. And the only consulting done by the EDCs arborist is generally “damage control”.

I recommend the following:

- a. Tree pruning and removals should be coordinated with the boroughs.

- b. Vegetation management should not be limited to only those trees directly under power lines. All “hazardous trees” must be identified to prevent loss of life, power, and/or property.
  - c. Creation of a community forestry management fund (funded by public utilities). Each municipality would apply for the partial funding of the tree management projects focused on proper tree plantings/pruning/removals in and out of the electric line right-of-way.
2. Infrastructure Issues- Mitigation of flooding at the substation. This is vital to New Milford and the surrounding communities. We depend on the power generated by the New Milford substation to operate sump pumps that keep water out of our homes. The construction flood walls will exacerbate the flooding in New Milford. The New Milford substation needs to be raised. This should be a top priority.
3. Communication- Representatives of the Borough of New Milford have tried on several occasions to setup meetings with representatives of PSE&G, to talk about:
- a. The New Milford substation and
  - b. A tree management plan for New Milford.
- These attempts at an open dialog have failed. It is clear that PSE&G has no interest in discussing either issue.

### Conclusion

1. PSE&G must raise the New Milford substation.
2. PSE&G must work with local municipalities to develop proper tree and vegetation management. Boroughs simply can't handle the fiscal burden of managing street trees alone. In the past the Borough's concerns and plans regarding the management of trees in the electric line right-of-way were dismissed out of hand. PSE&G simply cannot continue riding rough shot over the Borough. We have suffered with this policy for far too long. All we have to show for their efforts are dead/dying/damaged trees and power outages.
3. Regular communication must be maintained with localities.

Respectfully yours,



Austin J. Ashley  
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