



Agenda Date: 04/23/14  
Agenda Item: 2D

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**Board of Public Utilities**  
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Post Office Box 350  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350  
[www.nj.gov/bpu/](http://www.nj.gov/bpu/)

ENERGY

IN THE MATTER OF THE BOARD'S REVIEW OF THE )  
UTILITIES' RESPONSE TO HURRICANE IRENE )  
ORDER )  
DOCKET NO. EO11090543 )

**Parties of Record:**

**Stefanie A. Brand, Esq.**, Director, New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel  
**Philip J. Passanante, Esq.**, Atlantic City Electric Company  
**John Carley, Esq.**, Rockland Electric Company  
**Mike Connolly, Esq.** on behalf of Jersey Central Power & Light Company  
**Sheree Kelly, Esq.**, Public Service Electric and Gas Company

BY THE BOARD:

**BACKGROUND and PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On January 23, 2013, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("Board") issued an Order (the "Irene Order") with over 120 recommendations and instructions for the Electric Distribution Companies (EDCs). The Irene Order was the culmination of a lengthy investigation into the responses and actions of the EDCs during and after Hurricane Irene. Since then, the EDCs have submitted responses and have taken many actions to implement the recommendations included in the Irene Order.

The Irene Order directed the Energy Division to review the EDC submissions for and work with the EDCs on eleven of these recommendations including recommendation BPU - 61 -- Hazard Vegetation Tracking. The Board specified that this program,

"[s]hall track information such as the outage causation, proximity of the tree/vegetation to electrical facilities, last trimming cycle of the circuit that experienced the outage, location of tree/vegetation within or outside of the right-of-way (ROW) or easement, and any other pertinent factors, including storm event, local cutting, wind, etc. This tracking system shall be maintained by the respective EDC and be available to Staff upon request."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In re the Board's Review of the Utilities' Response to Hurricane Irene, Docket No. EO11090543, Order Accepting Consultant's Report and Additional Staff Recommendations and Requiring Electric Utilities to Implement Recommendations, Order at 57.

The Irene Order directed Energy Staff to form a working group and begin discussions focused on establishing the required vegetation tracking mechanism. In accordance with the Board's directive, Staff arranged a conference call on April 23, 2013 with the relevant company representatives to discuss the scope of the initiative under BPU - 61 Vegetation Outage Data and Process Overview. During that discussion, Staff requested that the EDCs provide a list of data currently being tracked involving tree-related outages. The utility representatives complied and submitted materials explaining their current standard operating procedures regarding their data tracking of such outages.

Staff held a conference call meeting on May 14, 2013 to get clarification of the comments received by the utility representatives. After further review of the submissions, Staff arranged a meeting in Trenton on June 3, 2013 to discuss possible tracking enhancements that Staff determined were needed going forward to satisfy the Board's directive. In September 2013, Staff circulated a draft recommendation based on the previous discussions of the working group, and asked the EDCs to review the document and submit any proposed edits for Staff consideration. On October 28, 2013, the EDCs filed joint comments for BPU-61 – Tracking System for Distribution System Outages Related to Trees and Vegetation.

After much discussion with the EDCs, Staff has concluded that many of the categories the Board identified for tracking are already being captured by the EDCs' internal reporting. However, Staff also concluded that there were some areas of focus that do require more tracking by the EDCs as explained in further detail below. During the course of this collaborative effort, the utilities did request that there be different tracking and reporting requirements for a "normal operating conditions" day versus what must be reported during and after a major event.<sup>2</sup> Staff agrees with the EDCs on this point as restoration of service and safety should be the primary focus in the midst of any major weather event.

Therefore, Staff recommends that the factors in the specified categories listed below be tracked by the EDCs for tree-related outages during normal operating conditions, but not during major system storm events when restoration of service and safety of the public are the main priorities.

### **Weather**

Atlantic City Electric currently tracks the weather conditions present at the time of the outage/interference. These designations range from clear, extreme heat, ice, fog, windy, etc. Staff recommends that each EDC describe the weather conditions present at the time of the tree-related service interruption.

### **Trim Cycle**

Three of the EDCs currently include the last trim date of the vegetation involved in the service interruption in their tree caused outage data records while one did not. Going forward, Staff recommends that all the EDCs be required to list the last trim date of the vegetation involved in the outage for the circuit in question.

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<sup>2</sup> As defined in N.J.A.C. 14:5-1.2.

## Details

A tree caused event that is investigated by an EDC forester (see investigative threshold below) will capture certain details, if known and determinable, in its outage management system (OMS) or, in order to accommodate differences in each EDC's respective OMS, through another appropriate system. Staff recommends that the EDCs should note the following details in the report of a qualifying event:

- Whether the tree causing the outage was located in the in public ROW or on private property;
- The distance of the tree causing the outage from the line/circuit disrupted;
- Type of line/circuit impacted; i.e. primary, secondary, sub-transmission, etc.;
- Description of the damage to utility facilities; i.e. tree fell on lines, branch fell on lines, tree or branch encroached on facilities;
- The cause of the damage to the tree causing the outage, if known.

## Tracking Threshold

Currently, each EDC uses an individual threshold for tracking tree-related outages. In an effort to collect the most helpful data possible, Staff recommends that each EDC be required to initiate an investigation and track the data outlined in this document, in addition to information it currently collects during an outage; if 500 customers are affected or an outage on a circuit lasts longer than three hours. As some EDCs use a lower customer threshold such as 250 customers, Staff recommends that those EDCs continue to use that customer level; however, Staff recommends that a 500 customer outage will be the minimum level needed to require an EDC to initiate an investigation.

## Reporting

The EDCs shall provide Staff with a summary report and listing of incidents that trigger an investigation as part of their annual system performance report ("ASPR") required under N.J.A.C. 14:5-8.7, beginning with the 2014 ASPR, which will be due on or by May 31, 2015.

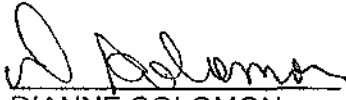
## DISCUSSION and FINDING

The Board has reviewed the Staff recommendations listed above which were developed in collaboration with the EDCs. The Board **HEREBY FINDS** that the Staff recommendations appropriately implement the directives of BPU – 61, and may provide information that will be helpful in formulating further policies with regard to outages caused by trees and vegetation during "normal" weather. Accordingly, the Board **HEREBY DIRECTS** the EDCs to comply with the above Staff recommendations, prospectively, beginning on June 1, 2014.

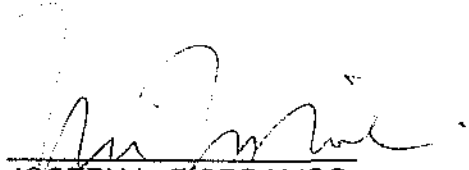
While the Board agrees with Staff and the EDCs that restoration and safety are paramount in the aftermath of a major weather event; the Board is persuaded that there is a need for the EDCs to perform some level of post storm analysis specifically of tree-related outages. Therefore, the Board **DIRECTS** Staff to explore potential amendments of N.J.A.C. 14: 5-8.8 for post storm analysis of the damage caused specifically by vegetation to be included as part of the major event report.

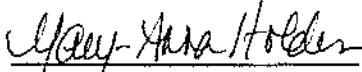
DATED: 4/24/14

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES  
BY:

  
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PRESIDENT

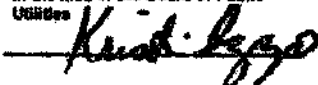
  
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I HEREBY CERTIFY that the within  
document is a true copy of the original  
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IN THE MATTER OF THE BOARD'S REVIEW OF THE UTILITIES' RESPONSE TO  
HURRICANE IRENE

DOCKET NO. DOCKET NO. EO11090543

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