

September 20, 2012

Through the NJLOM OEM Committee, I had the opportunity to read the "Performance Review of EDCs in 2011 Major Storms" and attend a follow up meeting on September 18, 2012. I'd like to thank BPU President Hanna and everyone involved for not only the opportunity to meet but for the follow up on the storm response.

I would also like to follow up by putting some of my concerns/suggestions in writing.

Many of the suggestions in the report cover many of the experiences that we had in Pompton Lakes. One suggestion that I strongly support is that ALL employees of electric companies be trained in some level of ICS. In our small community not only are our Police, Fire and First Aid members trained but also our DPW workers, Mayor and Council and Dept Heads. The higher the level of responsibility during an event should require a higher level of ICS training. I think this should be implemented for all utility companies, BPU, etc... even if it needs to be accomplished through legislation.

I support the increase in penalties and President Hanna's philosophy of using it as a last resort.

The report also speaks about customers seeing electric crews sitting in restaurants for hours. The report speaks about the crews needing break. I believe everyone would agree on crews needing breaks however after the October 2011 snow/ice storm many of our residents witnessed crews sitting in a local Dunkin Donuts for hours. When the crews were asked why they weren't out doing repairs they responded that they were waiting for JCP&L to assign them a job. Our residents weren't the only ones to make complaints like this. I would like to recommend that crews report to regional command centers such as each county OEM office and be assigned from there.

Vegetation plays a large role during storms. I would like to suggest being pro-active and working with local Shade Tree Commissions. Offer education sessions to Shade Tree Commissions when they have training sessions. In Pompton Lakes the Chair of our Shade Tree Commission is actually a JCP&L employee so he brings a balanced perspective to the table. Maybe even offer grants to local Shade Tree Commissions for certain types of plantings or projects that support the electric companies.

Getting ACCURATE Communication was a major problem during the storms. There was not an accurate count of how many residences were without power and when they would be restored. Our senior residents, young families and special needs residents need accurate information so they can make arrangements until the power is restored. Working through the OEM Coordinator in each town would be the easiest and most accurate way. Each local OEM Coordinator could be assigned a direct contact at the electric company. In Passaic Cty there are 16 communities. If those 16 communities gave information to and received information from one person there would be less miscommunication.

During Hurricane Irene we were told that power grids were shut down and were safe. I spoke of one resident that had a close call because his power wasn't off. Since Tuesday I've learned of an electrician that also had a close call when he went to work on home after Irene.

During the October snow/ice storm we had several locations where we had to leave emergency personnel because of downed live wires. If the electric companies could send out a cut and run team, roads could be re-opened, emergency responders wouldn't have to stay on scene to keep the area safe and these teams could send back an accurate description of what repairs will be needed.

I would like to end by saying that a year later major basic problems still exist. To this day JCP&L uses the same routine logging system whether they are responding on a sunny day or when they are in "storm mode".

On the very day that the meeting in the BPU office took place (9/18/12), our community faced a problem with JCP&L. At approx 9:30PM there was a report of a brush fire near a condo development in town. When the police and fire dept responded they found a downed wire in the woods that was

sparking. The wire was a singleton. It powered our water tower and our two radio towers. Radio towers that host the Pompton Lakes Police Dept, Fire Dept, etc.... These towers are part of our critical infrastructure and are on the list as such. JCP&L was contacted several times over the course of the night. The message was always the same – they were in storm ready mode and could not give an ETA for a crew. To avoid a situation similar to what happened in Tinton Falls, our Fire Department kept members on scene. At approx 3:30AM on 9/19, a JCP&L van responded but could not do anything. A short time later a JCP&L pick up truck responded but could not do anything. Finally a lineman arrived who could pull the fuse and make the scene safe. Our volunteer fire dept was able to leave the scene at 4AM.

Thank you,  
Katie Cole  
Mayor, Pompton Lakes