



Regulators Address Issues Resulting From Storm Sandy

The Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA) opened a docket in November, 2012 to investigate the performance of Connecticut's electric and gas distribution utilities in restoring service following Storm Sandy. To date, interrogatories have been answered, public hearings in towns impacted by the storm have been held, and the first round of hearings with the utilities have been conducted. The electric utilities claim they have improved their storm restoration response over their 2011 effort.

The investigation into the 2011 storms determined that the State of Connecticut and its municipalities had a restoration plan while the utilities had their own, separate plan(s). There had not been the integration that would have allowed all parties to work together toward a common goal. Following the 2011 storms, the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) convened a committee that included the State of Connecticut, municipalities and utilities to develop an integrated emergency plan for the state.

Storm Sandy was the first major storm where all participants in the restoration used a fully integrated restoration plan. Through the DEMHS committee, the municipalities requested utility assistance in clearing downed wires and energizing priority locations prior to starting restoration efforts. In the case of United Illuminating (UI), its customer restoration curve shows a plateau of about 1 to 1 ½ days where the restoration process did not proceed due to municipal priorities. Northeast Utility's restoration curve did not show a plateau due to the fact that it had enough assets on the ground to handle both the municipal priorities and perform restoration. If the assets assigned to the municipal priorities had been assigned to restoration, the restoration would have presumably been completed sooner. Another issue that has surfaced is that the State of Connecticut did not submit any priorities before the storm hit. The State notified the utilities of their priorities during the restoration process.

The DEMHS restoration plan committee started the work of integrating several plans, but there is more to be done. The delicate balance between town safety and a speedy restoration of power to all customers should be evaluated (and potentially adjusted) based upon the experience during Storm Sandy, and the State should develop its priorities so the utilities can address them in their plan.