



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
NEWS RELEASE

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**CONSUMER COUNSEL ELIN SWANSON KATZ SAYS IT IS TIME FOR ACTION
IN STORM INVESTIGATION DOCKET**

(June 11, 2012 -New Britain, CT) - Saying that now is the time for action, Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz asked the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) for orders directed to the state's public utilities, and penalties against Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P) in relation to service restoration issues and delays after Tropical Storm Irene and the October snowstorm. In a brief filed today by the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) in Docket Number 11-09-09, *PURA Investigation into the Public Service Companies Response to the 2011 Storms*, the Consumer Counsel stated that she greatly appreciates the attention and resources that PURA has devoted to this investigation. Now, after almost ten months of investigation, Connecticut residents need to see that change is happening.

“Are we better prepared for the next storm?” the Consumer Counsel asked. “The answer must be yes. Connecticut ratepayers – its residents, towns, businesses, hospitals, schools – remain vulnerable if we do not implement meaningful change to our disaster response immediately. PURA has the authority to issue the orders that will result in change.”

Arguing also that CL&P had been “imprudent” in elements of its storm response, OCC also called for penalties against the company, and a disallowance of recovery of any imprudently-incurred storm costs.

Some other issues addressed and recommendations made in OCC's brief include the following:

- ***Restoration promises made by CL&P that were never met:*** Residents need accurate outage information to make decisions about returning home from a shelter or reopening their business. CL&P was not forthcoming on accurate restoration estimates. OCC has requested “that PURA issue a finding that CL&P was imprudent in its management of its communications with the public regarding estimated restoration times, and to issue a penalty therefor in future proceedings.”
- ***Poor implementation and management of CL&P's Town Liaison Program:*** CL&P's town liaisons often provided information that was incomplete or inaccurate, which resulted in frustration among town leaders and liaisons alike, as well as town residents who relied on this information for planning purposes. The liaisons also did not effectively convey the town's priorities to CL&P. OCC requested “that PURA assess

penalties for CL&P's imprudence in the design, implementation, and management of its town liaison program and order CL&P to immediately commence regularly-scheduled emergency management meetings to communicate with every municipality in its territory."

- ***Pole maintenance, replacement and administration:*** Confusion over what poles were damaged and who was responsible for repair or replacement contributed to delay in storm response. OCC recommended that a single administrator be appointed to coordinate on pole issues, "which would be an essential part of a comprehensive solution to storm preparedness shortcomings."
- ***Medically fragile customers:*** The companies were unprepared to appropriately prioritize medically vulnerable customers after the two extended outages. OCC requested that PURA order CL&P and UI to "develop a means of providing towns and relevant agencies with the contact information and location of medically fragile customers, and amend their emergency plans accordingly."
- ***Vegetation management:*** OCC has requested "that PURA order CL&P to immediately recommence its mid-cycle vegetation management program at the amount budgeted for in the last rate case."
- ***Transmission system failures:*** CL&P's transmission infrastructure failures have proven the need for better emergency response planning for its transmission system. OCC has requested that PURA direct CL&P to amend its Emergency Response Plan to include protocols for the restoration of its transmission system.
- ***Storm restoration costs:*** OCC has recommended that in future proceedings determining storm expense recovery, PURA consider reductions to such recovery for imprudently incurred costs.
- ***Telecom issues:*** OCC has requested that PURA order both AT&T and Verizon to develop emergency plans specific to Connecticut, and require annual emergency drills.

Consumer Counsel Katz added, "Given the severity of these outages and the public's frustration over how they were handled, it's evident that our public service companies need to put forth a serious effort to make things right. Another major storm is inevitable, if unpredictable. We need to do better next time."

A copy of OCC's brief is available on its website. PURA's final decision in the proceeding is expected on August 1st.

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The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is the State of Connecticut's advocate for all utility ratepayers. OCC seeks to ensure just and reasonable rates and reliable utility service for customers of Connecticut's electric, gas, telephone, and water utilities and reasonable protection for cable television customers. For more information, visit www.ct.gov/occ.