



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CONSUMER COUNSEL JOINS MUNICIPALITIES' CALL FOR IMMEDIATE
STEPS TO PREPARE FOR NEXT STORM**

(January 11, 2012 -New Britain, CT) - Connecticut towns and residents have expressed “strong fears” about what might happen to the electric grid if Connecticut is hit by a major winter storm in the next few months, according to Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz. Because of this, the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) has asked the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to take immediate steps to address public safety concerns in advance of any further weather-related power outages.

The Towns of Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, and Wilton filed a joint request for short-term remedial measures on December 22, 2010, in PURA’s investigation of Connecticut’s utility companies’ response to Tropical Storm Irene and the October Nor’easter. Since that investigation will likely take several months to complete, Consumer Counsel Katz filed a letter supporting the Towns’ request for quick action “to address public safety concerns that arose during the two storms.”

The OCC called for The Connecticut Light & Power Company (CL&P) to take immediate actions to mitigate possible impacts from another major winter storm. These actions include securing additional tree crews and line crews to assist during outages, address damaged tree limbs (“hangers”), and complete temporary repairs remaining from prior storms; taking steps to shorten the time it takes to assess damage following a storm before restoration activities can begin; and investigating ways to integrate local town resources into CL&P’s efforts to clear roads and downed power lines.

The OCC’s letter acknowledged that CL&P is already working on at least some of these measures and meeting with a number of towns to discuss the company’s efforts. The OCC asked that PURA order CL&P to report back within two weeks on the actions that are underway. The OCC further requested that PURA order implementation of the requested short-term measures, to the extent they were not already completed, on an expedited basis.

“What’s going to happen when we finally get another snowstorm? That’s what people are worrying about,” Consumer Counsel Katz stated. “We’ve heard the same question from the towns as well. We’d like some assurances from CL&P that they’re addressing the issues from the last storm, and making improvements. We’re asking PURA to help move those efforts along. We need to take a hard look at our options in the long term, but we believe there are a number of things that can be accomplished quickly as well. I understand that CL&P is implementing some changes, but we need to reassure folks as to what’s being done to protect them right now.”

“I think we’ll all rest a little easier when the snowflakes finally start flying if we have this information,” she added.

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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.