

1 STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2 PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION AND
3 NEW HAMPSHIRE HOMELAND SECURITY
4 & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

5
6 March 31, 2009 - 7:06 p.m.
7 Gove Middle School Cafeteria
8 1 Stephen Batchelder Parkway
9 Raymond, New Hampshire

10 RE: DECEMBER 2008 ICE STORM REVIEW
11 Hearing to receive public statements.

12

13 PRESENT: Chairman Thomas B. Getz, Presiding (NHPUC)
14 Commissioner Graham J. Morrison (NHPUC)
15 Commissioner Clifton C. Below (NHPUC)
16 Director Christopher Pope (HS&EM)

17 ALSO PRESENT: Reptg. the New Hampshire PUC Staff:
18 Thomas C. Frantz, Director - Electric Div.
19 Randall Knepper, Director - Safety Div.

20 Reptg. Residential Ratepayers:
21 Meredith Hatfield, Esq., Consumer Advocate
22 Office of Consumer Advocate

23 Reptg. NH Homeland Security & Emergency Mgt.:
24 James C. Van Dongen, Public Information Off.

25 Court Reporter: Steven E. Patnaude, LCR No. 52

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Okay. Good evening,
3 everyone. I'm going to open this public statement hearing
4 following up on the ice storm of December 2008. My name
5 is Tom Getz. I'm the Chairman of the Public Utilities
6 Commission. On my right is Commissioner Clifton Below; on
7 my immediate left is Chris Pope, who is the Director of
8 the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management;
9 and, on the far left, is Commissioner Graham Morrison.
10 And, I also note that in the back row is the Consumer
11 Advocate, Meredith Hatfield. In addition, from the Public
12 Utilities Commission also here this evening in the back is
13 Tom Frantz, who's the Director of our Electric Division,
14 and over here on my left is Randy Knepper, who's the
15 Director of our Safety Division, and, in the front row, is
16 Jim Van Dongen, from Emergency Management.

17 The public statement hearing this
18 evening is a joint effort by the Public Utilities
19 Commission and Emergency Management, as part of our after
20 action review of the ice storm. Which will review the
21 preparedness and response both of public utilities and
22 State government to the ice storm that began on the
23 evening of December 11, affected approximately 60 percent
24 of New Hampshire customers at its peak, and resulted in
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1 some customers going without service for as long as two
2 weeks. In very general terms, an after action review is
3 focused on analyzing what happened, why it happened, and
4 how it can be done better. In order to effectively
5 analyze what happened, we have begun by systematically and
6 comprehensively gathering data. And, this data-gathering
7 effort started during the ice storm, with the records and
8 notes kept by the various individuals involved in
9 responding to the ice storm, including Chris, Randy, and
10 myself.

11 In addition, the Public Utilities
12 Commission has submitted a set of 50 requests to the
13 various utilities asking for documents and answers to
14 particular questions. The first round of which was
15 answered on February 27. If you go to our website, at
16 puc.nh.gov, there's a portal for the ice storm. And, if
17 you click into that portal, you will see all of the
18 questions that we've been asking, you'll see a comment
19 form, and, to date, we received over 100 replies to those
20 comments, and the comments can be filled out -- the forms
21 can be filled out online, and also can be mailed in.
22 There are comment forms also available here this evening,
23 if you would like to fill one out tonight. And, also, if
24 you would like to speak tonight, there are forms. If you

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1 could just -- Mr. Frantz has them. If you want to fill
2 out, and, when it comes time, I'll just call your name
3 out, and if you could come up to the podium and just share
4 with us your experience and recommendations, and,
5 Mr. Patnaude will record them for a transcript that will
6 ultimately be available online.

7 The hearing tonight, and the nine others
8 that have been scheduled around the state, this is the
9 third one, are another part of the information gathering
10 effort. And, we expect that hearing your experiences
11 during the ice storm and your recommendations for
12 corrective measures will help us both in identifying
13 issues and deciding on specific courses of action. Your
14 analysis of what went wrong and what went right, and your
15 recommendations about how things can be changed for the
16 better, are critical inputs to the process.

17 I'd also like to point out some other
18 steps that have been taken since the ice storm. Over the
19 part few weeks, Director Pope has held a series of
20 meetings with local, public safety, and community
21 officials, which he will explain in some more detail, and
22 also Director Pope has initiated a review process for
23 State agencies, which he will also describe. One other
24 effort that will occur this spring concerns the issue of

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1 undergrounding utility lines. Chairman Naida Kaen, is a
2 Representative from Durham, who's Chair of the House
3 Science, Technology & Energy Committee, will be holding an
4 informational session in her committee to better
5 understand the potential costs and benefits of
6 undergrounding facilities in New Hampshire.

7 Now, as we collect this information,
8 it's obviously a large amount of data, and we will be
9 analyzing it to identify issues that need attention and
10 remediation. While it's not our intention to prejudge
11 anything, I think there is no serious debate that
12 communications on many levels must be improved, and that
13 was identified very early in the event. And, that is why
14 also that the Public Utilities Commission Safety Division,
15 through Mr. Knepper, is also facilitating a review of
16 utility communications practices. This effort will
17 include communications by the utilities to the PUC, to
18 State Emergency Management and to the Emergency Operations
19 Center during an event, to local Emergency Management
20 directors, and to the public generally. And, the goal of
21 this effort is to identify practices that should be
22 adopted by all utilities in advance of next winter.

23 At the same time, there are other issues
24 that require a closer look before we can come to

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1 definitive conclusions. In general terms, from the PUC's
2 perspective, we will be looking at whether the utilities
3 were reasonably prepared, that is, did they plan
4 responsibly, and whether they responded reasonably. That
5 is, did they execute their plans effectively. Within that
6 framework, we will be looking at particular issues, which
7 include, among other things, the effect of tree trimming
8 on customer outages, the status of mutual aid agreements
9 among utilities, protocols for prioritizing restoration,
10 and decisions on allocating work crews. Depending on what
11 emerges from this review, the PUC can proceed in a number
12 of directions. That could include rulemakings, it could
13 include changes in practices and protocols at the
14 utilities, and it could also include formal adjudicative
15 proceedings to address particular issues.

16 To assist us in our review, both because
17 of the sheer amount of the data that must be sorted and
18 analyzed, because there may be certain subjects that
19 require specialized expertise, we have issued an RFP for a
20 consultant. We are reviewing the proposals, and we hope
21 to be announcing very soon who will be assisting us in
22 that effort.

23 But, again, as I noted earlier, we have
24 not reached any specific conclusions at this point, and

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1 that is because our job is to take an objective look at
2 all of the facts. But I can assure you that we will
3 follow the information we receive wherever it leads us.

4 Now, we have a couple of goals in mind
5 through the process. One is to issue a report in
6 September which will set forth the results of the after
7 action review, including recommendations for specific
8 proceedings that may be required as a follow-up. And,
9 another is to make sure that the utilities have improved
10 their planning and response protocols, especially as it
11 concerns communications, in advance of next winter.

12 Before we call on folks to come and
13 share their experiences and recommendations, I'd like to
14 turn to Director Pope for a little bit of an explanation
15 about what his agency has been doing.

16 DIRECTOR POPE: Thank you very much,
17 Tom. And, good evening, everyone. The Division of
18 Homeland Security & Emergency Management is responsible,
19 with the assistance of a multitude of State agencies,
20 folks from the federal government, folks from nonprofit
21 agencies, to operate the State's Emergency Operations
22 Center during a disaster. Each community has an Emergency
23 Operations Plan. They have citizens who are at some state
24 of readiness, businesses that are at some state of

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1 readiness. But, during a disaster, when the needs of a
2 community exceed the resources of that community, the
3 framework for Emergency Management, is that that
4 community, the 234 communities in New Hampshire, seek
5 assistance from the State Emergency Operations Center.
6 So, in our building, where we're located in Concord, there
7 were anywhere from between 50 and 150 extra people working
8 in our facility for the 14 days, from actually before the
9 storm started, until right up to about Christmas Day, when
10 we were in the response mode.

11 In that period of time, four citizens in
12 our state lost their lives that could in some way have
13 been attributed to the storm. Some 200 citizens were
14 injured, a vast majority of them were injured by inhaling
15 carbon monoxide, which is a poisonous gas, most typically
16 it was from generators or unvented heaters trying to keep
17 their homes warm. Ninety local Emergency Operation
18 Centers, operated by communities, were open, many of them
19 for the full two weeks, and many of them on a 24/7 basis.
20 Fifty-nine shelters were opened in the state, and, at the
21 maximum height of the storm, housed 1,500 citizens. For
22 the first time, 17 of those shelters were pet-friendly.
23 As we know in our business, for many people, if they're
24 not able to bring their pet with them to the shelter, then

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1 they're not going. They're staying home.

2 During the storm, we actually exceeded
3 our state capability and needed to request assistance from
4 the federal government. We ordered 100,000 gallons of
5 potable water per day to assist folks with their potable
6 water needs. We ordered food, mostly in the form of MREs.
7 We ordered generators for critical infrastructure in
8 communities that either had a generator that failed or did
9 not have a generator. And, we ordered shelter equipment
10 to help support the many shelters that were operational.
11 We had over 1,200 other requests from communities for
12 assistance, in everything from providing water for
13 livestock at farms, to helping communities solve problems,
14 and trying to provide as best updated information that we
15 had available to us.

16 Tom mentioned that we are now focusing
17 on our Emergency Management response to this storm, to
18 identify what we can do better. We are also collecting
19 information. We are collecting information from the
20 portal on the Public Utility Commission website. We have
21 conducted the meetings that Tom talked about with local
22 public safety officials to get their opinions about what
23 we did well and what we could do better. We have met with
24 constituent groups, various constituent groups, including
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1 volunteers, including news media, including engineering
2 groups, elected officials, to get their opinion.
3 Ultimately, we will take this information and we will
4 develop our own after action report with an improvement
5 plan, which will describe how we can do better the next
6 time.

7 And, finally, we will redraft, we will
8 rewrite our State Emergency Operations Plan. This summer
9 we will hold our fifth annual Emergency Preparedness
10 Conference, which has been hugely successful. And, the
11 theme this year will be sharing model practices from the
12 four Presidentially declared disasters that we experienced
13 this last year.

14 While we've had many positive comments
15 from the constituent groups that we've met with, and
16 during other public meetings, we are really here to get
17 your honest opinion about what we can do better. We want
18 to hear from you, we want to listen to you, we want your
19 frank comments. And, we hope to be able to turn those
20 into positive improvement.

21 Thank you. Thank you for taking the
22 time out of your busy lives to come here tonight and share
23 your story or your concern with us. I will remain here
24 after the meeting is over. If you're uncomfortable

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1 speaking publicly, and would prefer to catch our ear off
2 to the side, I will be here, and I welcome you to come
3 introduce yourself to me and share your thoughts then,
4 too.

5 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Okay. Thank you, Chris.
6 And, the same applies to the PUC folks, afterwards, if you
7 would like to talk offline about something. So, the first
8 name I have is Carol Levesque, from Deerfield. And, if
9 you could come up please. And, if you just let us know,
10 because there may be different utilities represented here
11 tonight, whether you're from the Co-op or PSNH or Unitil.

12 MS. LEVESQUE: Yes. I'm a customer of
13 PSNH. I live in Deerfield. We were without power for
14 five days. I'm here tonight based on the concern that I
15 think the utilities did not respond quickly enough to get,
16 you know, enough crews in to get this gigantic storm
17 handled in a more timely manner. I know they had 500
18 crews come in early, but I think they really should have
19 had a thousand, which they had in the end. Had they had a
20 thousand crews here, by Monday, the following Monday, I
21 think that most people would not have been without power
22 for two weeks. I myself was only five days, but there
23 were parts of Deerfield that were out for eight days.
24 And, I find that unacceptable.

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1 I do want to say that I would like to
2 commend the line workers and everyone that assisted them
3 and the customer service people for doing a great job. I
4 think the problem lies with the management of the storm.
5 Whoever was in charge did not handle this in a proper way.
6 I realize this was a storm that had not -- the magnitude
7 had not been seen before, but, early on, they should have
8 realized that 500 crews was not going to cut the mustard,
9 when you had 300 and some odd thousand PSNH customers
10 without power.

11 So, that's basically what I have to say.
12 And, I just hope that the PUC and the State Legislature
13 will do something to make sure that this does not happen
14 again. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Thank you. Christopher
16 Rose.

17 MR. ROSE: Thank you. Hello. I'm
18 Christopher Rose. I'm the Town Manager in Raymond. And,
19 I'll let others speak to other aspects of this. What I
20 particularly wanted to talk about was the communication
21 aspect. We found it very frustrating to deal with both --
22 to deal with both Public Utilities -- Public Service and
23 the New Hampshire Co-op, and to get information from them
24 as to where they were working or their timetable, we think

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1 we'll be turned on in this area in two hours or two days.

2 People would call us and ask us, and we
3 couldn't get an answer. Or, there were times we got an
4 answer, and found out it was just wrong. They would say
5 "we have crews working on such and such a road", and, as
6 near as we could find, there were no crews in that area.

7 We have spoken with -- we had a meeting
8 about two weeks ago with some representatives of Public
9 Service. And, we worked together and talked about how we
10 could try and improve our communication. We're going to
11 try to do the same thing with the New Hampshire Co-op
12 people.

13 I think that the storm overwhelmed them.
14 I understand that that happened. It's not been done, you
15 know, that type of storm hasn't happened in this area
16 before. But, you know, just to let us know. People, you
17 know, if they knew that they were not going to get power
18 back for several days, maybe they would have gone and
19 purchased that generator or maybe they would have, you
20 know, not tried to keep their refrigerator closed up and
21 save the food, they would have tried to eat more of it or
22 something. People just wanted to know. They wanted the
23 information. And, I think people were willing to allow
24 for the fact that this was a massive storm, because there

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1 was a lot of damage out there. But they got frustrated
2 because they couldn't get the information. They couldn't
3 get the information as to what was happening and when it
4 was going to happen. And, when we talked to Public
5 Service, they, you know, they talked about how they had to
6 start in certain areas and move along and work in an
7 orderly manner. And, that's fine. That's the kind of
8 information you can put out, and people will understand
9 that. But you have to tell them.

10 And, so, that's all my point was. I
11 think they need to share information with the -- and, as
12 you said, we have an Emergency Management team in every
13 town. Get that information to the town level, then, you
14 know, we can help disseminate it in our communities, and
15 that way we get out to the people as much as we can. It's
16 hard to get out too much when the people don't have power
17 for their cable or their phone systems and whatnot, but,
18 you know, you do what you can. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Thank you. And, again,
20 the communications, like I noted in my opening remarks,
21 and this has been a theme through the previous two
22 meetings we had, the one in Peterborough, at ConVal High
23 School, and the one at Exeter High School, of -- that
24 folks need good information to make good decisions. And,

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1 we've even, you know, seen that acknowledgment by the
2 utilities in the reports that they filed with us on their
3 own.

4 And, I was just going to point out, kind
5 of following up on what Ms. Levesque asked about, if you
6 go to our website, you can see the types of questions
7 we're asking, we're asking the utilities, and the kind of
8 answers we're getting and the reports we're getting, that
9 will show that we're following up on those issues about
10 crews and when they came and how many there were, and
11 what's sufficient, and also on the communication issue.

12 CHAIRMAN GETZ: The next is Andy Singh,
13 from Exeter. And, is Kerri your wife?

14 MR. SINGH: Yes, she is. I missed the
15 one in Exeter. So, I know that she carried the torch for
16 the family. But I also wanted to make some comments.
17 First of all, I wanted to thank you for the opportunity to
18 speak. I think this is a very important step. I have
19 four major points. And, Unitil is my provider. Four
20 points: I think there was poor communication. This led
21 to miscommunication. There was apparently a lack of a
22 plan, and the lack of proper resources on Unitil's part,
23 in my opinion. First of all, my criticisms of Unitil have
24 absolutely nothing to do with the workers. I think

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1 everybody here, everyone I've spoken to, feels they were
2 doing God's work. It was the holidays, terrible
3 conditions, they were working 17, 18 hours a day. I think
4 that they were extraordinary. I just wish that the
5 leaders of Unitil lived up to the example that their
6 workers set.

7 People talk about "poor communication",
8 and I think that's putting it very mildly. The first
9 three days you could barely reach anyone at Unitil. If
10 you did, you were given absolutely no information. That
11 poor communication slowly evolved into miscommunication.
12 I'm calling it "miscommunication" as a euphemism for lies.
13 I was told on five consecutive nights that my power would
14 be restored by midnight that night. The Police Chief in
15 Exeter was told that they were working, as someone just
16 pointed out, that they were working on the pole that was
17 down in my neighborhood. The Police Chief was told that
18 while we were standing in front of the pole that was down.
19 There was a pole that laid down across the road for eight
20 days without being moved. So, the roads couldn't be
21 plowed. So, it limited emergency access. It became a
22 safety issue as well.

23 So, there was miscommunication to
24 customers, miscommunications to emergency personnel.

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1 Amazingly, there was even miscommunication within the
2 Company. There were times where people in Unitil were
3 posting on the website that all the homes in Stratham or
4 50 homes in Stratham were now without power. So, Unitil
5 -- the trucks left because they thought everybody was back
6 on. In reality, there were several hundred homes without
7 power that thus went without power for several more days.
8 So, even within the Company there was miscommunication.

9 I think it all boils down to what
10 appears to me, and I'm certainly no expert, but it appears
11 to me that there was a lack of a tenable plan. I have no
12 idea, but that's only what appears to me.

13 I think another important thing is,
14 communication is one thing, because that can be learned or
15 taught, I hope. There was also a very significant lack of
16 resources. To me, it seems that Unitil is a small
17 company, I know they're a local company, they're based out
18 of Hampton, and I'm certain that the people that lead the
19 Company are very good men and woman, but they did a
20 terrible job. They didn't have the resources that were
21 available. And, more importantly, they didn't have the
22 ability to get the resources. A lady said that PSNH has
23 500 trucks or 500 crews working at a time. At the peak,
24 according to Unitil's own information, at their very peak,

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1 they had 119 trucks, 119 units. And, that was split
2 between us and Fitchburg, Massachusetts. And, they
3 clearly did not have the resources, nor the ability to get
4 the resources. And, I don't know how that's going to
5 change, because subsequent to this ice storm, they took
6 over another utility in Rochester, so they're even more
7 spread out than they were before.

8 I'm a physician. If there had been such
9 a systematic failure in something I did, I would lose my
10 license, and rightfully so. If an elected official acted
11 so poorly, they would be voted out of office. If a
12 regular business acted so poorly, no one would go to them.
13 And, that's why we need you. This is, in essence, a
14 government-run monopoly. I can't say, you know, Unutil
15 did a lousy job that they can no longer provide my
16 service. I've got no choice. We need you.

17 And, I think the first question to ask,
18 I think it's very easy for this to be just turned into a
19 public regulations spin. I think the first question that
20 needs to be asked is "Can Unutil provide the service?" I
21 think it's a very basic question. And, to me, that has to
22 be shown. It has not been shown to this point. That's
23 all I have to say.

24 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Thank you. Tom Keenan.

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1 MR. KEENAN: Tom Keenan, also of Exeter,
2 New Hampshire. As Mr. Singh indicated, I also wish to
3 express my appreciation for having the opportunity to, in
4 a calm way, relay my personal experiences, hopefully, in
5 the spirit of trying to learn from this difficult event.
6 My comments, I could not capture the full brunt of my
7 comments in brief remarks, and I will follow up on the
8 website, and also would appreciate the chance to chat
9 offline, so that I can understand how I might be able to
10 more fully convey specific recommendations and
11 suggestions.

12 But, along three specific areas,
13 communications have been talked about by pretty much
14 everyone, and I do have some specific issues with regards
15 to communications. But, beyond communications, my second
16 point pertains to emergency preparedness and response, or
17 lack thereof. And, I'm pleased to see that there are
18 several officials who appear to have formal duties in that
19 regard, try to bolster our capabilities there. And,
20 thirdly, specific comments with regards to performance or
21 lack of performance of the utility company. I live across
22 the street from Dr. Singh, so we share the same utility
23 company, that being Unitil.

24 Communications, I'd have to say that

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1 access to the utility provider was virtually nonexistent.
2 Also, from a design perspective, most of the communication
3 protocols that are in place presuppose that all utilities
4 are operating normally. So, for example, in the event of
5 a power failure, our phone systems went out. When I made
6 numerous attempts to contact Unitil via my cellphone,
7 their system, their automated system has a means somehow
8 to match your -- you had to punch in your -- whatever
9 number, your account number. And, when the phone that
10 you're calling from does not match that account number,
11 you were automatically kicked out of the system. All
12 right? Just as an example of how far difficult it was for
13 a customer to initiate communications with Unitil. What
14 little information was provided from Unitil, I think
15 Mr. Singh summarized that pretty well, so I won't replot
16 ground that's already been turned over there.

17 Beyond Unitil on the communications
18 front, I found it excruciatingly difficult to deal within
19 the Town of Exeter with any municipal authority, fire,
20 police, or anyone to get any coherent information. They
21 expressed to me personally a great deal of frustration
22 about the absence of information forthcoming from Unitil,
23 and, consequently, they, in turn, struggled to communicate
24 to the people that they represented in the community.

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1 On the issue of emergency preparedness
2 and response, I just retired from the chemical industry
3 after 35 years, and we were mandated to have
4 extraordinarily stringent plans and preparedness, but not
5 only the plan, but to test, on a routine basis, in an
6 integrated manner with local fire, police, and emergency
7 response personnel, to actually simulate drills and carry
8 out activities to assure that the plan was understood and
9 could be carried out under circumstances that are beyond
10 the normal. It is my observation that, if a plan existed
11 either within the municipality in which I live, the state
12 in which I live, and with the utility service provider for
13 which I'm obliged to conduct my business, that plan was
14 very, very well hidden, and absurdly implemented to a
15 standard that is just unacceptable.

16 With regards to the utility itself, I've
17 heard comments tonight, I've read countless articles on
18 the Web and in newspapers about the level of resources
19 that may or may not have existed. Unitil, for whatever
20 reason, has crowned itself in a standard of performance in
21 responding to the very same difficulties that every other
22 service provider had during the storm, and they clearly
23 separated themselves from the pack and performed at a
24 standard that was quite poor. At our house, we were ten

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1 days without power. We found that to be quite difficult.

2 With regards to management system
3 addressing here at the Public Utilities Commission, I
4 think it would be incumbent on the PUC to find some way to
5 formally test the voracity of the emergency preparedness
6 plan that Unitil and other utility companies have within
7 the state. I don't know what protocol you may have to, in
8 fact, do that. But I think there needs to be a far higher
9 level of rigor and heightened expectation that, if the PUC
10 is going to grant the authority to Unitil and other
11 companies to provide single source critical services like
12 electrical power, we should expect that there should be
13 corresponding services and capabilities that go with that.
14 Thank you very much for your attention.

15 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Thank you, Mr. Keenan
16 Joyce Wood.

17 MS. WOOD: Good evening. My name is
18 Joyce Wood. I'm a Raymond resident. I'm also a Selectman
19 here in Raymond. I used to work with Tom at Public
20 Service Company of New Hampshire for many years. I had a
21 couple of points. The communication point was brought up.
22 You know, people need better information to be able to
23 plan what their own personal responses are to power
24 outages. You know, if you're going to be out of power for

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1 two hours, you take different steps than if you're going
2 to be out for four or five or more days.

3 I know Public Service has an automated
4 outage reporting system. For the life of me, I couldn't
5 figure out how to get into it. You know, I called up the
6 night my power went out. It was probably around 9:30,
7 quarter of 10, maybe a little later, got a message that
8 the wait was 20 minutes. I said "To hell with that."
9 Hung up. Tried to call back and to get into the automated
10 reporting system, and couldn't figure out how to get in,
11 and by then the wait had got to 40 minutes, so I just hung
12 up. So, you know, there needs to be better information,
13 more information that's provided when you dial in on what
14 your options are for being able to report outages.

15 Let's see. What else? You mentioned
16 something earlier, Tom, about the possibility of
17 undergrounding utilities. And, I know that's a very
18 expensive option, especially for existing roads. But I
19 wonder if there's a way to improve the coordination
20 between the utilities and different municipalities to
21 perhaps put utilities underground when roads are being
22 reconstructed. It may be feasible to do it at that point,
23 where it's not feasible to go back and underground them
24 after the road is already there. And, as an example, here

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1 in Raymond, on Epping Street, which is the road that you
2 came down to get to the school here, we have a project
3 planned for the eastern end of the road, where they're
4 going to dig up and reconstruct that road. And, Public
5 Service put all new poles and wires down that stretch of
6 the road, I think it was just last summer. If there had
7 been a little bit better coordination, we might have been
8 able to put some of that underground.

9 Let's see. I know too much about this
10 industry, because I've worked in it for 30 plus years.
11 Right now, I'm working for several municipal utilities in
12 Massachusetts, and I know that they're struggling under
13 the burden of regional transmission costs. The regional
14 transmission rate went up by a third just last summer; it
15 will probably go up by that much again this summer. There
16 are billions of dollars worth of transmission projects in
17 the pipeline here New England. And, I wonder if we're
18 building to a reliability standard on a regional basis
19 that is ridiculous for the amount of reliability we get on
20 the local basis. I wonder if there is not an imbalance
21 between the investment in transmission versus
22 distribution. And, I don't know if the Public Utilities
23 Commission is in a position to deal with that. That's --
24 I realize transmission is pretty much FERC regulated.

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1 But, if the state regulators got more involved in the
2 planning and expansion process at the ISO-New England
3 level, there may be some better decisions made about where
4 the investment goes to ensure reliable delivery to the
5 customers.

6 This is a -- The last issue I have is, I
7 noticed, and I'm working with folks from Public Service on
8 this, and I am a PSNH customer, when our power went out in
9 December, we had -- it didn't go out cleanly, okay? We
10 had dips and surges leading up to the outage. I don't
11 know if that's a problem on the circuit. We've had
12 several outages since December in our neighborhood. A
13 large one on March 1st affected this area and several of
14 the surrounding towns. I was told it was a traffic
15 accident. Must have been one heck of a traffic accident.
16 You know, the power just doesn't go out cleanly when it
17 goes out. And, we've had problems with the power having
18 momentary interruptions in the power service on several
19 occasions since December, and even since March 1st, the
20 most recent being last week. So, I'm working with the
21 folks over in Epping to see if they can figure out if
22 there is some problem on our circuit. But I don't know if
23 other people in town are experiencing that problem, if
24 there are residual problems from the ice damage that are

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1 still, you know, undiscovered and uncorrected.

2 So, I'll let somebody else have a turn
3 at the mike. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Thank you. And, Senator
5 Barnes.

6 SEN. BARNES: Mr. Chairman, I want to
7 thank you for coming to Raymond, along with the rest of
8 your team. I want you also to know that yesterday the
9 four utility companies that we're talking about here in
10 the state were nice enough to come up and address six of
11 our state senators. And, I happened to be there at the
12 meeting. We asked for this meeting a couple of months
13 ago. And, they all came together, and there is a
14 gentleman here from the Co-op who happened to have been
15 there.

16 I don't want to be redundant, but
17 communication was on the lips of every single senator that
18 represented the hardest hit part of the State of New
19 Hampshire. Communications was horrendous. My
20 understanding was that there was a number given to all of
21 the towns, through the town managers, the town
22 administrators, an emergency number to call. I heard, as
23 I visited my 12 towns, that that number probably went out
24 of existence 18 months ago and wasn't in existence

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1 anymore. Whether that's true or not, I don't know. But I
2 would think and hope, after the communications that we had
3 with the folks yesterday, and they seemed to listen very
4 well, I thought it was a great meeting, it lasted over two
5 hours. They all had pamphlets and all of this and all of
6 that.

7 But the communications, and you've heard
8 that is the thing, if you folks can key in on that and
9 make sure that the folks in the town, and the folks in the
10 town that should have it are the town administrators or
11 the city administrators, I'm not saying every selectmen,
12 which I happen to be one also in Raymond, should have
13 these numbers. But I do say that somebody in that town,
14 Emergency Management or someone, has got to have it. Now,
15 we're talking about Emergency Management. I was a little
16 surprised yesterday that a lot of our towns don't have
17 Emergency Management, they don't have a setup. In
18 Raymond, we're lucky, we've got our chief here who has
19 done a great job with his people.

20 As I went around and visited my 12 towns
21 during the blackout, visiting all of the welcome centers,
22 I guess we'll call them "welcome centers", places that at
23 least had some heat and some power, I found out that some
24 of my towns were kind of weak in that area. And, I don't

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1 know what can be done about that. I think it's something
2 that should perhaps be addressed. And, we've got a guy
3 like this sitting here, who's a wealth of knowledge, and
4 I'm sure other towns have the same type of situation, I
5 wouldn't hesitate to call up Chief Pratt and say "Chief,
6 what can you do to help us in the area?" I got a hunch
7 he'd be tickled pink to go out and be able to help put
8 some things together. But -- Did I say it right, Chief?

9 CHIEF PRATT: That sounds good.

10 SEN. BARNES: Sounds right. Okay. So,
11 that's a very important factor.

12 Now, another thing that has come from
13 the storm: Tree-trimming. Now, it is my understanding,
14 and I might be dead wrong, so you guys can help me out,
15 because I'm putting this question to you guys. I
16 understand that last year you allowed PSNH to spend \$13
17 million on tree-trimming, and that was the maximum.
18 Obviously, the people who are on the service pay that
19 \$13 million through their rates. And, is that a true
20 number? Did I hear that correctly? Or, did you not put a
21 cap on them?

22 MR. FRANTZ: There's no cap on
23 tree-trimming.

24 [Court reporter interruption]

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1 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Wait. Wait.

2 SEN. BARNES: He can't hear. Maybe you
3 can come on up here. I'm glad to hear you can answer
4 that. I've been wondering about that answer for quite a
5 while.

6 MR. FRANTZ: There is no -- There is no
7 cap on tree-trimming. As part of PSNH's rates, we set a
8 number that's a reasonable number based on historic
9 experience for tree-trimming. We've actually increased
10 that number over the last few years, because we thought
11 they were actually underspending on tree-trimming. And,
12 that number is not capped. There's a target number. We
13 review it. They file with us annually on what their
14 tree-trimming budget is. And, we'll be happy to get you
15 the exact number. I can give it to you tomorrow.

16 SEN. BARNES: So, that \$13 million
17 doesn't sound familiar to you, and you're the guy in
18 charge of it?

19 MR. FRANTZ: Actually, I think that
20 number is probably, for PSNH, a little bit -- it's close,
21 but not unreasonable.

22 SEN. BARNES: Okay. That's fine. Thank
23 you. The reason I bring that up is, on Thursday, in front
24 of the committee I sit on, we have a recessed bill on

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1 tree-trimming. I happen to be a co-sponsor of that piece
2 of legislation. I hope and I'm assuming that probably my
3 buddy Clifton will probably be over for that hearing to
4 answer some questions, and I'm sure that \$13 million will
5 come up again. Because it's an important piece of
6 legislation. Because we have folks who, and I guess I'm
7 coming from this side, even though I signed onto the bill,
8 my great grandfather planted that elm tree in front of my
9 house, and he and my great grandmother were married under
10 that tree, and my grandmother and grandfather were married
11 under that tree, and my mother and father were married
12 under that tree, and my wife and I were. And, I don't
13 want anybody cutting that damn tree down. So, I don't
14 know how we protect that 150 year old elm tree from being
15 cut down. Got to be a way to do it.

16 That's I guess what I've got for you
17 folks to think about. Communications, guys, that is
18 something that was really not a very healthy situation.
19 And, as I told the folks yesterday, the utility companies
20 kept saying "Oh, this is a once-in-a-lifetime. We'll
21 never see another one." Well, I want to remind you,
22 Mother's Day of '06 we had a flood that's 100 years,
23 "won't see it again." Ten months later, we did it a
24 little worse than we had it before. So, forget about

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1 "we'll never see it again." I think we should be prepared
2 for the next time like it's going to happen tomorrow.
3 And, I urge that, whatever you fellows can do about it, to
4 work with the board and work with the Legislature, because
5 we're willing to work. Six senators were there who really
6 had a problem.

7 My biggest problem, and I mentioned it
8 yesterday, was with Unitil. Not with the workers, I think
9 the people that were out there in those buckets working
10 through the two snowstorms that happened during it deserve
11 medals. And, I think the companies that brought the folks
12 in, I think they deserve a lot of credit. And, I hope and
13 pray that maybe you guys, maybe it's not in your authority
14 to have sent letters out to those states that sent us
15 help, from Tennessee, New Jersey, Kentucky, the country of
16 Canada, Quebec, I hope somebody had the decency to send a
17 letter to the head people up there thanking them for
18 coming down here and helping the State of New Hampshire.
19 I'm sure you fellows probably did that, if it's in your
20 authority. If you didn't, I'm sure the next time it
21 happens I'm sure you will. But maybe next time they will
22 get here a day quicker.

23 The Town that I had, of the 12 towns,
24 that had the worst situation was the Town of Danville.

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1 Danville is Unitil. Danville -- I went down to Danville,
2 and this is a true story, guys, I walk into the fire
3 station, and there's three or four firefighters there, the
4 Chief was there. And, one guy saw me and he came unglued.
5 And, the Chief said "Jack, I've got to tell you something.
6 He pulled Mr. so-and-so out his house last night, the
7 fellow dies during the ice storm down in Danville." So,
8 this guy was stretched. And, those guys were stretched as
9 tight as a ten-cent rubber band. And, they had no idea
10 when things were going to happen, their power was out.
11 And, as I was listening to them, the fire alarm comes off
12 with their beeper and they were off again to another
13 disaster in the Town of Danville. And, that is damn
14 unfair to the people that are working out there. These
15 guys are volunteers. You guys, I don't know what you can
16 do about that, except perhaps Unitil, I'm sure you're
17 going to be working with them and stressing to them that
18 things have got to be a little bit better, like a lot
19 better the next time around. And, I think they probably
20 had some problems in Exeter, I think I heard Exeter had a
21 problem with Unitil. And, I'm not trying to bang Unitil.
22 The gentleman, the vice president was there, did a nice
23 job with his presentation, and he offered to come out to
24 the towns, and I guess they have to try to cement some

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1 broken wires that we have, communication wires. And, the
2 Town of Danville got a letter from me today stating they
3 should invite him down to come to their town, to their
4 Selectmen's meeting, to visit the townspeople in Danville,
5 if they want to come in and listen to what those people
6 went through down there.

7 And, I want to thank you guys. I know
8 you're going to fix it. I know you're all bright
9 individuals. This guy, I worked with for a number of
10 years, my buddy down here on the left. And, I know -- I
11 know you all have the interest of the people of the State
12 of New Hampshire at heart. So, I rest my case. But get
13 ready for the next one, because it's liable to be next
14 December.

15 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Thank you, Senator.
16 And, I know Chris wants to talk a little bit about the
17 issues you raise with respect to the towns. And, of
18 course, during, in the midst of all of this, we did find
19 that there was a range of experiences among the towns.
20 Some folks had more experience with these issues, some of
21 the Emergency Management Directors were newer to the
22 issues. But I know Chris is following up and having
23 meetings with all of the Emergency Management Directors,
24 and did find there was some issues with the direct phone

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1 lines, that Emergency Management Directors would have a
2 line that was supposed to be dedicated to the utility, and
3 not to be given out, and sometimes it was given out.

4 But I don't know if you want to follow
5 up on some of those issues?

6 DIRECTOR POPE: Well, I've written down
7 three things to specifically follow -- I've written down
8 three things to specifically follow up on that you brought
9 up, Senator, and that is one of them. It's the first I
10 have heard -- and you're correct, each local public safety
11 unit, specifically, the Emergency Management Director, the
12 police chief and the fire chief of every community, needs
13 the ability to have an inside number with the utility so
14 that they can reach the utility on a 24/7 basis. And, not
15 just for disasters, like ice storms, but, if there's a
16 motor vehicle collision in the middle of the night, and
17 there's a live wire on a car, you've got to be able to get
18 the utility line crew there quickly to de-energize that
19 line so you can rescue the person in the vehicle. And,
20 so, this is the first time I've heard that that number
21 didn't work for 18 months before the disaster. So, we
22 will specifically follow up on that.

23 We did hear testimony saying that, for
24 one of the utilities, and I don't recall which one off the

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1 top of my head, this private, non-published number was
2 posted on the internet or somewhere publicly, and the
3 public, the citizens buried that number, which then meant
4 that, in an emergency situation, a local public safety
5 official couldn't get in. And, in at least one community,
6 there was a fire, and I don't recall again off the top of
7 my head, there was a fire during this incident, and there
8 was a line that needed to de-energized. And, so, you
9 really need that inside capability.

10 The issue of local communities, you are
11 also absolutely correct. We have 234 local communities,
12 and really just one statute in the state that says what
13 that community has to do with respect to emergency
14 management. And, that is the law says they have to
15 appoint an Emergency Management Director for each
16 community. And, if they don't, then it defers
17 automatically to the senior elected official, the Chair of
18 the Board of Selectmen or the Town Council. But, beyond
19 that, there is really very little in the statutes about
20 what is required.

21 So, in fact, if you, for schools, there
22 is a state law that says "a school has to have an
23 Emergency Operations Plan." School officials have to have
24 incident management training, so that they're all

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1 communicating with common terminology. That is not
2 required of local communities. And, so, the issue has
3 cropped up. One of my responsibilities is to be a good
4 salesperson and to convince communities how important, how
5 vital it is that they have a local Emergency Operations
6 Plan, a local Hazardous Mitigation Plan, and what's called
7 "NIMS training", National Incident Management System
8 training. Those three things are critical for
9 communities. And, sir, I think you mentioned, you need to
10 train it, and you need to exercise it, and you need to
11 continually improve it. That's my job to help convince
12 people. Some people have a carrot, some people have a
13 stick. I statutorily have a carrot. I just wish, sir,
14 that sometimes that carrot was the size of a Louisville
15 Slugger. And, I think you can appreciate that, being a
16 baseball fan yourself. But it is not, it is a carrot.

17 FROM THE FLOOR: "Play ball" next week.

18 CMSR. BELOW: I think Joyce -- Joyce
19 Wood commented that the concern about regional
20 transmission. And, fortunately, here in New Hampshire, we
21 do have a statute that directs us to be engaged in the
22 regional processes and advocate on behalf of New
23 Hampshire. And, certainly, the rising cost of
24 transmission, regional transmission for reliability is a

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1 concern, reliability is important in that system. But
2 Chairman Getz actually chairs a regional cost containment
3 working group with ISO-New England, working with the other
4 state commissions and the utilities and ISO-New England,
5 to look at ways to better manage and contain the cost of
6 transmission investments. So, it's something we are very
7 engaged within and aware of and concerned about, finding
8 that right balance. That we have, you know, the kind of
9 reliability at the local level that we're striving for at
10 the regional and national level as well.

11 CHAIRMAN GETZ: And, I don't have any
12 other public statement forms. If there's no one else that
13 would like to speak tonight, then we will close the public
14 statement hearing. And, we're going to look at all of
15 your comments, in the context of all the other comments
16 we're getting. And, we've got seven more evening public
17 statement hearings. And, we'll be publishing a report in
18 the fall, and you can always keep track of what's going on
19 through our website.

20 So, thank you for coming out, everyone.
21 We appreciate it.

22 (Whereupon the hearing ended at 7:58
23 p.m.)

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