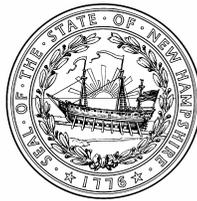


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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PUC REPORT ON DECEMBER 2008 ICE STORM**

The New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission today issued its Final Report on the After Action Review it conducted of utility preparedness and response to the December '08 Ice Storm, which was the most damaging storm in recent history, leaving over 400,000 customers without power within the first 24 hours. The PUC examined extensive information collected and analyzed by its Staff, an assessment performed by NEI Electric Power Engineering, comments made at ten public statement hearings, responses to an online customer survey, and self assessments performed by the state's electric utilities.

PUC Chairman Tom Getz stated that "The primary focus of the After Action Review has been to identify improvements to emergency planning, storm response, resource acquisition and allocation, system restoration and communications. We have identified 44 action items designed to remedy operational and management weaknesses revealed by the ice storm." Many positive steps have already been taken by the utilities and some items will require changes in PUC rules, adjudicative proceedings or legislative action. "The Commission is committed to ensuring full and prompt implementation of the changes to utility service set forth in our After Action Review," said Chairman Getz.

The Director of the PUC's Safety Division, Randy Knepper, pointed out that, "Public Service Company of New Hampshire, National Grid, Unitil and the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative put forth a tremendous effort during and after the ice storm to restore service to their customers." He said, "Every utility employee should be commended for the hard work they did to restore service under extremely difficult conditions."

Tom Frantz, Director of the PUC's Electric Division stated that, "We looked closely at tree trimming practices but did not find a significant basis for concluding either that the utilities were not following established protocols or that the protocols themselves contributed appreciably to the extent of the outages."

The NEI Assessment Report concluded that initial damage assessments performed by the utilities were slow; the process to distribute accurate assessments of restoration times was ineffective; and communications with state and municipal officials and first responders were ineffective. The PUC convened a Communications Task Force, which was led by Mr. Knepper and included Homeland Security and Emergency Management, the Department of Transportation and the electric utilities. The Task Force developed improved procedures for situational awareness, resource reporting, expansion of the web-based Emergency Operations Center reporting function, and dissemination of information to the media.

PUC Executive Director Debra Howland stated, “The After Action Review identified areas where a utility may not have prepared or responded to the ice storm in a manner consistent with reasonable expectations. An adjudicative proceeding will be commenced to examine NEI’s specific conclusions that Unital’s emergency plan was inadequate and that its restoration strategy was inappropriate.”

Other major topics covered by the Final Report include:

- Emergency planning – The report recommends a number of measures to improve utility emergency preparedness, including regular emergency plan reviews and updates, integration of municipal and utility emergency response procedures, and designated emergency response contacts to work with State and local officials.
- Resource planning and deployment – The report recommends that utilities work with municipalities and other utilities to ensure adequate and effective resource allocation and deployment in emergencies.
- Utility communications – The PUC led Communications Task Force developed an outage status template for utility reporting, created a standardized utility resource report, and expanded state website functionality to share information with utilities on road closures, shelter openings and municipal needs.
- Vegetation management – Most of the trees and limbs that fell on power lines and contributed to outages originated from outside the approved trim zones. Commission Staff will work with utilities to develop standardized trim zones and cycles, and take steps toward more effective monitoring of vegetation management.
- Outage reporting – A utility’s ability to collect and analyze data during an outage is critical to effective emergency response and communications. The Commission recommends that each utility implement and maintain a modern outage management system to utilize outage data more effectively.

The PUC Final Report, the NEI Assessment and other related documents are posted on the PUC website at [www.puc.nh.gov](http://www.puc.nh.gov).

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