

**THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**IR 18-062**

**Investigation of Utility Poles and Attachments  
Storm Damage and Response Issues**

**ORDER OF NOTICE**

On April 10, 2018, Commission Staff (Staff) filed a memorandum recommending that the Commission open a generic investigation docket regarding matters related to the safety and general status of utility poles and attached wires and cables in the state. Staff noted the significant number of recent wide-scale and severe weather events which have had a substantial impact on New Hampshire utility customers and distribution system assets as a result of downed wires, pole failures, and pole hardware failures. Those incidents have contributed to extensive outages and public safety concerns, with downed wires due to pole asset failures and tree damage causing road closures that hinder first responder efforts and delay travel along major routes.

Staff recommended that two issues in particular should be investigated. First, the condition of utility pole and attachment assets should be addressed, as cyclical pole maintenance and inspection procedures to identify rotted or structurally deficient poles and hardware, coupled with timely replacement or repair of those assets, would reduce pole and pole hardware failures. Second, the duration of road closures could be reduced by more efficient and effective identification procedures for various types of attaching entities on a utility pole, particularly those in the communications space, through improved notification and response in the event of downed lines and cables.

The Commission authorizes Staff to conduct an investigation pursuant to its statutory authority in RSA 365:5 (regarding independent inquiry by the Commission), 365:6 (authority to

inspect plant), 374:1 (duty of public utilities generally to provide safe and adequate service), 374:3 (general supervisory powers of the Commission), 374:4 (Commission duty to keep informed), 374:7 (general investigation powers of the Commission), and 374:34-a (pole attachments). That investigation shall include, *inter alia*, those issues identified in Staff's recommendation memorandum.

Because this investigation involves the physical condition and safe operation and maintenance of utility poles and attached facilities, the Commission expects that all pole owners and attaching entities may be affected by the outcome of this investigation and should actively participate in the investigation. The Commission shall hold a technical session on May 17, 2018, for the purpose of reviewing relevant issues and developing potential alternatives for addressing those issues. Staff shall endeavor to complete its investigation and deliver a report to the Commission on or before September 28, 2018.

Each party has the right to have an attorney represent the party at the party's own expense. Staff's memorandum and subsequent docket filings, other than any information for which confidential treatment is requested of or granted by the Commission, will be posted to the Commission's website at <http://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2018/18-062.html>.

**Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby**

**ORDERED**, that Staff shall investigate the issues referenced herein, with a report of its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to be made to the Commission no later than September 28, 2018; and it is

**FURTHER ORDERED**, that Staff shall conduct a public stakeholder technical session at the Commission's offices at 21 South Fruit Street, Concord, New Hampshire, to be held on May 17, 2018 at 10:00 a.m., to develop a procedural schedule for this investigation; and it is

**FURTHER ORDERED**, that the Executive Director shall publish this Order of Notice on the Commission's website no later than one day after the date that it has issued.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this twelfth day of April, 2018.



Debra A. Howland  
Executive Director

Individuals needing assistance or auxiliary communication aids due to sensory impairment or other disability should contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, NHPUC, 21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10, Concord, New Hampshire 03301-2429; 603-271-2431; TDD Access: Relay N.H. 1-800-735-2964. Notification of the need for assistance should be made one week prior to the scheduled event.

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Docket #: 17-139-1      Printed: April 13, 2018

### **FILING INSTRUCTIONS:**

- a) Pursuant to N.H. Admin Rule Puc 203.02 (a), with the exception of Discovery, file 7 copies, as well as an electronic copy, of all documents including cover letter with:
- DEBRA A HOWLAND  
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- b) Serve an electronic copy with each person identified on the Commission's service list and with the Office of Consumer Advocate.
- c) Serve a written copy on each person on the service list not able to receive electronic mail.

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