To: Committee Examining Readiness and Response to Hurricane Irene
Legislative Office Building
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Hartford, CT 06106-1591

From: Elizabeth Jenkins-Donahue
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Re: Comments and suggestions About My Personal Experience

Date: September 23, 2011

My name is Elizabeth Jenkins-Donahue. I live at 34 Hi-top Hill Rd. in Voluntown, CT. I am a home healthcare nurse in northeast Connecticut as well as a private property owner in Voluntown. These two variables frame my perspective Tropical Storm Irene.

Early in the week of August 21, 2011 I began paying attention to the high potential that my personal and work life would be impacted by Hurricane/Tropical Storm Irene. Our home is situated on a heavily wooded lot 0.2 miles from Route 165 and has underground utility wires. We have a private well and because we do not have a history of loosing utility service do not have a personal generator. My husband and I began to prepare assuring our water, battery and non-perishable food supply. During the week we trimmed trees and secured loose items.
In my work life I worked with my colleagues to prepare. Homecare providers are well trained in helping clients develop predetermined emergency plans and then set their plan in motion when an emergency is imminent. Plans include reminding patients to secure the same items I did in my personal life. They are also assisted with accessing extra medications, oxygen and other necessary medical supplies.

During this period as I traveled about the regions I noted branches over and close to utility wires, poles and transformers along state roads on both private and state property. I thought "Why aren't the utility companies trimming. In fact I haven't seen them trim in awhile!"
As the storm approached my husband and I intensified our planning based on damage predictions which turned out to be true. We lost power Sunday, August 28th at 10:30 A.M. It remained out for seven days and one hour on a street with underground wires close to a main state road with power less than a half mile away three days after the storm!

As a homecare nurse I became aware of vulnerable individuals, who had done emergency planning for the storm, left without access to emergency help, fresh water, and electricity to provide needed treatment. Many state and town roads were impassable resulting in delay of medical supplies. In two instances patients required hospitalization because they ran out of emergency supplies. Elderly housing facilities in

the region were without power for as long as seven days! That said our population serviced by the Jewett City Utility company were on line in less than two days.

I am extremely disappointed in our utilities' response to the storm. They failed in their shared responsibility for managing delivery to avoid public system failure. The utility providers must be proactive in the emergency preparedness planning. It is imperative they institute collaborative, on-going maintenance and trimming of any vegetation which can fall on lines and or wires. Just prior to emergencies, like Irene, the companies must step up these activities. Unfortunately in my community I did not observe any of this type of activity.

Thank you for holding these hearings. I look forward to learning the plans to avoid similar situations.

Elizabeth Jenkins- Donahue