

Tropical Storm Irene Hearing Questions

Responses by South Norwalk Electric and Water (SNEW)

Utility Companies

- **Preparation**

- **What are the best practices for readiness? Response?**

South Norwalk Electric and Water followed the procedures and practices set forth in its emergency plan as required by Sec. CGS 16-32e.

- **How did you fare for readiness? Response?**

SNEW began with the increased readiness phase by meeting with field crew supervisor and management to discuss the approaching storm and actions that were necessary to be taken prior to the storm's arrival. SNEW held a preliminary meeting as the storm began its approach on Wednesday and followed up with a meeting on Friday to make sure all assignments were completed. Additionally a conference call was held on Saturday at noon to discuss the storm's progress. Electric lines crews were notified of their requirement to be available for storm restoration and crews assigned normally to other areas of SNEW, such as construction, forestry and ground operations and water utility operations staff were given assignments to support the electric line operations group. The preparation resulted in a coordinated and organized response to storm damage which began with crews being called in on Sunday afternoon as the storm began to subside.

- **What was the damage from Tropical Storm Irene? How many lines were affected? How many customers were affected?**

SNEW is connected to the power grid through two sub-transmission lines owned and operated by CL&P which feed SNEW's primary distribution substation. On Sunday morning at 0010 hrs both of SNEW's incoming feeders from CL&P intermittently lost power. SNEW's incoming relays and breakers based on the voltage fluctuations opened leaving SNEW's distribution substation without power and consequently all of its 6,600 customers without power. SNEW's substation staff responded. Between the hours of 0110 hrs and 0120 hrs restored service to its customers through normal switching procedures only to have voltage fluctuations cause the station again to lose power. At approximately 0243 hrs Sunday morning one of SNEW's incoming feeders from CL&P failed completely leaving SNEW supplied by a single but stable feeder. SNEW restored its entire distribution system other than one neighborhood (discussed below) with full power from 0243 to 0803 Sunday. SNEW's customer base other than one small neighborhood had full power. At 0803 hrs on Sunday morning SNEW's second incoming feeder from CL&P failed completely, again leaving SNEW's entire 6,600 customer base without power. The isolated neighborhood served by a SNEW overhead circuit was damaged by a large tree across the primary

conductors snapping four consecutive poles resulting in poles, transformers, and conductors on the ground. On Sunday afternoon SNEW's combined crews were brought in to repair the damage to the neighborhood after an inspection by line operations management. CL&P crews in the early evening of Sunday repaired tree damage to one of the SNEW incoming feeders and restored power to both feeders at 2247 hrs Sunday. At 2314 hrs Sunday all SNEW distribution circuits had been restored and all SNEW customers except for 10 had power. As CL&P's crews worked to restore service from the feeders SNEW's crew worked in the isolated neighborhood setting poles and clearing trees to replace the broken poles to prepare the area for restoration the following day. Ten customers were left without service until Monday because SNEW's staff had approached the 16 hour cutoff (explained below) and were sent home for eight hours rest. Mid-afternoon on Monday the ten customers were back on line and had power. SNEW line crews then worked with TTD and then CL&P through Labor Day.

- **What was the extent of your disaster preparedness plan? Please provide details.**

- **Were we prepared for a category 1 hurricane?**

SNEW was prepared for a significant wind storm event. Hurricane category is not relevant to the disaster recovery plan.

- **What damage could have been done?**

SNEW will not speculate on what damage could have occurred if the winds were of a different magnitude, nature and or direction.

- **Where/how could we have done better?**

SNEW's service territory sustained very light damaged as described above this light damage is attributable to the fact that approximately one half of SNEW's customer base is served by underground electric facilities, not susceptible to wind damage. The remaining portions of SNEW's customer base are served with overhead wires in an urban environment with many multifamily builds on small lots without a significant number of overhead lines threatened by trees. The wind damage outage occurred only in neighborhood with many large urban trees. SNEW has historically not seen significant wind damage to its distribution system due to the nature of its service territory.

- **What lessons did you learn?**

- **What are your standards in regards to tree trimming? Have these standards changed over the past 10 years?**

SNEW has performed minimal tree trimming due to the nature of our service territory.

- **Staffing/Labor**

- **How many line crews were deployed during peak restoration?**

Two SNEW line crews supplement with water utility construction, operations and tree staff.

- **How many line crews were brought in from other places, if any?**

1 Reserved by not used due to minimal damage. Release to work elsewhere Monday a.m.

- **How many line crews are employed by your company now vs. 2000?**

Same number of crews

- **What are your policies/standards regarding hours of work (hours/shift)?**

Maximum 16 hour shifts with 8 hour rest periods (strictly enforced).

- **Communication**

- **How was the communication between your company and municipalities?**
 - **What worked? What didn't?**
 - **How could this communication be improved?**

EXCELLENT Norwalk's Emergency management provides coordination, however SNEW need little communication with the team.

- **How was the communication between your company and your customers?**
 - **What worked? What didn't?**

SNEW uses an answering service who performed well during the storm.

- **How could this communication be improved?**

Because of the nature of the SNEW outage little customer communications was necessary. SNEW's (whole system) was going to be restored virtually at once.