



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Thursday, August 27, 2020

Re: Energy and Technology Committee Public Listening Hearing - Testimony on Eversource's response to Tropical Storm Isaias

Dear Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti and all of the esteemed members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

I am writing on behalf of my constituents of the 142nd House Assembly district to communicate the significant issues that they have experienced with Eversource CT and their poor response to Tropical Storm Isaias. In the weeks leading up to the storm, I had been hearing from my constituents how frustrated they were with the significant increases to the delivery rate within their Eversource electric bills. For many people, myself included, they assumed these rate hikes would have been linked to increased investment in grid infrastructure, tree trimming and other operational improvements. So when we experienced Eversource's poor response to the storm damage, we were all left wondering why.

Tropical Storm Isaias hit Connecticut on August 4th 2020. We all saw first-hand how the storm struck with more violence than expected and that there was significant damage, primarily to the power supply. That said, many of my constituents also commented that, from their standpoint, the damage did not appear to be as bad as that inflicted by Superstorm Sandy in 2012. I attach a full list of those issues reported to me in my role as State Representative in New Canaan and Norwalk. This is not a comprehensive list of all issues that occurred, but provides insight into what large numbers of my constituents experienced in the days (and in some cases, over a week) after the storm. I summarize the key points here:

- Safety issues. Loss of power created real safety issues for some vulnerable people. I had an elderly constituent who fell in the dark, cases of small children and babies suffering from heat issues and medically fragile people put at risk during this time of a global

pandemic when they had little choice but to stay in their homes to limit their risk to COVID-19 exposure.

- Many of these vulnerable customers were not prioritized and suffered without power for over a week after the storm.
- Food spoilage. Many residents during the COVID-19 pandemic have been stocking up their refrigerators and freezers to limit the number of visits to the grocery store in an effort to minimize infection risk; many lost hundreds of dollars of food due to spoilage.
- Lost medication. Many medications need to be refrigerated so had to be disposed of when the power failed. Some customers could not get new prescriptions due to limits on their insurance and others were able to get a new prescription from their doctor but were required to pay out of pocket for it.
- Work-from-home disruption. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are working from home and could not do this for over a week. Some constituents even had to stay in hotels out of the area so they could get critical work done.
- Outage reporting. Eversource's outage reporting system did not work well, making the creation of an accurate picture of outages virtually impossible. Many people drained their phone batteries while on hold with Eversource customer support as they could not text or log an outage online. I even had several constituents tell me they had filed outage reports several times per day over many days only to be told each time that there were no reported outages in their area.
- Severe communication issues at all levels. Towns were not getting information from their Eversource liaisons leaving mayors/local emergency departments in the dark on when resources were coming to their towns to clear downed wires and restore power. From my personal experience engaging with Peg Morton, Eversource's VP legislative liaison, she was always very responsive and did her best to deal with the issues I raised however there were many occasions where she had to spend time finding out what was actually going on as the information was not flowing to her. The overall effect was to increase frustration all-round as people could not get reasonable information from whoever they turned to.
- Slow response. The reduced numbers of local crews 'on call' as well as a failure to effectively provision out-of-town crews appears to have caused severe delays in repairing storm damage and restoring power. Many out-of-state crews were housed in Massachusetts and had to commute 2 hours per day to get to Fairfield County before they could start work. To this point, we saw no visible action in many parts of Norwalk and New Canaan during the first 48 hours after the storm.

For Tropical Storm Isaias, Eversource issued a report on July 31st estimating outages of 125-380K but they did not update their assessment as the weather models shifted in the days leading up to the storm. Total customers impacted were actually over 632K so it's no surprise their response was inadequate. As a counterpoint, United Illuminating (another Connecticut utility) updated their impact assessment on Aug 3rd with one that proved more accurate and their response was accordingly more appropriate.

Eversource's net profits have increased 175% in the last 10 years while over the same period the number of line crews has decreased by about 30%. Eversource Energy Earnings per Share (EPS) for the twelve months ending June 30, 2020 was \$3.50, a 29.15% increase year-over-year.

In addition, the company's top five executives received \$40M in total remuneration in 2019. It is not unreasonable to expect that a business that is growing profits in such a dramatic way would be investing in improving customer service, strengthening the grid and implementing improvements to how they respond to storms, especially in a world where we are seeing increasing numbers of extreme weather events.

The people I talk with are very frustrated with this monopoly (there being no choice in supplier for Connecticut's electricity customers). The only clear winners here are the Eversource executives and the shareholders who are receiving large returns on their investment – but this comes on the backs of Connecticut residents. Rates continue to go up, customer service and incident response has gone down, all while profitability continues to rise. I believe we are very justified in asking whether it is appropriate for a monopoly to be able to continue to behave in this way.

Thank you for hearing this testimony and I would hope that the Energy and Technology Committee look at this issue and establishes a much stronger regulatory environment that incentivizes the behaviors that will serve the interests of and protect the residents of Connecticut. I would like the state to hold Eversource accountable for producing a detailed plan for strengthening the state's power infrastructure, improving their storm response operations and implementing efficient and effective customer engagement systems.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lucy Dathan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lucy" being more prominent than the last name "Dathan".

Lucy Dathan
State Representative
142nd district

Attachment of customer complaints / issues. This is raw data, based on what was reported to me either by phone, email or Facebook:

Crew Issues:

- Reports of several crews idling for hours at Bowlmor on Connecticut Ave middle of the day
- Reports of at least six trucks with other crews at New Canaan utility yard at Exit 38 for hours on Sunday morning (last spotted 11:30AM Sunday 8/9/20)
- Crews from Missouri staying in Springfield, Massachusetts.
- Crews from Kansas, Ohio staying in Massachusetts
- Crews on Buttery Road had to wait for over an hour to get the “go ahead” to do work

Outage Issues that went beyond Sunday 8/9/20 when most of the state was due to be up:

- Middle Ridge Rd – Elderly couple. Man fell during the night and was not found until the morning. Woman with heart Condition. Would not leave home due to COVID.
- Silver Ridge Rd – Family with an adult child with severe developmental issues and could not leave the house due to COVID. They called in the outage several times per day over a week and but then did not get elevated due to the customer support saying that the family “did not report the outage”
- Charter Oak - Family with twin boys with a life threatening disease that need to have special foods, IV nutrition and medications refrigerated and also power to operate the pumps to administer these items. Lines were out in the middle of the road for a week (so could not leave their home in the event of a medical emergency)
- Elderly woman on West Norwalk Rd who could not operate her oxygen machine.
- As of 1:30PM Tuesday (8/11) the following streets did not have power:
 - Bowery
 - Bridle Path
 - Brookside (partial)
 - Carriage
 - Carter St
 - Cascade
 - Charter oak
 - Clapboard hill
 - Colonial court
 - Country Club lane
 - Country Club west
 - Dabney (half)
 - Danforth
 - Dan's Highway
 - Deep Valley (partial)

Dunning Road
Fitchlane
Gerrish lane
Hemlock hill
Hickory
Hillcrest Road
Hillside Ln
Hoyt Farm (half)
Indian rock
Jonathon Road
Juniper
Lake Wind
Logan Road
Lambert
Llewelyn
Lukes Wood Road
Michigan Road
Middle ridge
Nursery
Oenoke Ridge (partial)
Old Studio (partial)
Ponus (partial)
Ramhorne
Reeder Ln
River Wind
Silvermine
Siwanoy
Skyview
Smith Ridge Ln
Stonehenge
Stoneleigh
Thurton Drive
West hills
West Rd
White Oak Shade
Windrow Ln
Woodridge Circle
Woodridge Drive
Woods End Road
Woodway Ridge Lane

- No power on Dunning Rd where there are 13 homes. 128 Dunning still has a broken electric pole and wires down in the driveway that are supposedly not “live”
- Hoyt Farm, Middle Ridge, Long Ridge were without power, Reported Several times to Eversource but not on Eversource outage map. Several reports of elderly families, and small children with special needs.

- Heritage Hill was not prioritized despite 300 living in one complex, mostly elderly. Was a very easy fix - only took the trucks a couple of minutes in the end. The outage wasn't added to the map until Saturday, despite several reports before.
- Oenoke Condos: 165 units at Oenoke ranging from 1 bed/1 bath to 3 bed/2.5 bath – take an average of 2/people a unit – that is at least 330 people affected at Oenoke alone. Power was lost on Tuesday, Aug 4th approx. 2:30/3pm and not restored until about 10am on Sunday, Aug 9th. Property manager had to check on individuals. Eversource account numbers for those unable to, and in contact with residents who had left the property and were asking if the status was correct online. Roughly half of the residents are 55 plus and on refrigerated medications/have heart conditions/etc. – without a/c, without a way to store food, without a way to cook food (as stovetops are electric) and the entire property was pitch black once the sun went down.
 - **on a separate note, it has been noted over the years by various Eversource subs that our wires are old and not insulated properly – this causes an outage on the “odd side” of the street sometimes when a small twig hits the lines – we have brought this up time and time again but to no avail/response from Eversource**
- Sunday 8/9 - Forest/Heritage Hill area had power restored AND lost after mis-wiring. Bottom of Heritage Hill/Parade Hill area one of last to be restored - they connect via Parade Hill and not Heritage
- South of the Merritt on South Ave (including Charter Oak) was ignored till the very end.
- They said “I’m sorry ma’am there are currently no trucks dispatched to your area”. They have been saying that for days. There is no way we will get power back by midnight.
- We are on Woodridge Circle. It’s Tuesday, Aug 11 at 10:20am. Still NO POWER in the whole area (Woodridge Drive, Woodridge Circle, Wellesley, Sherwood Ln, Stonehenge) And very spotty cell coverage so never sure our messages are going through. (It’s impossible to sit in town hall parking lot all the time in hopes a message may be coming through) We have been in contact with Eversource a ridiculous number of times to no avail. They really don’t seem to know what is going on. Just drove around - the only trucks are Town of NC clearing tree debris from the side of the road on West.
- Pocconnock Trail Customer – out until 8/10 - So interesting, every time I called they told me they had no way of knowing how many are dispatched. Even the supervisor who called me back said they have no way of knowing.
- Still out on Canoe Hill from Ferris to Brushy Ridge. Our bedroom is 91 degrees. I’m cranky!
- Still out on lost district. Wish there was a central file we can all look at which identifies which streets are out so we can confirm that ours are on it.
- No power on Hickory off Carter. My family has gone to a hotel but they can’t take my dog and her heavy fur coat.

- Hoyt farms is still out and portions of Carter. Please help! We've gotten so many mixed messages and wrong info. This is not the way it's supposed to work, begging trucks in the streets to help. I've had to board my dogs and we are likely hotel bound if no power today as our house is a literal furnace.
- I feel like a broken record, but we are still out on Old Studio, despite all the streets around us having had power back for days now...
- I hope we are on the list, but if not, entirety of Sunrise and Marshall Ridge are out. 61 homes (Or 55 of you count differently as Eversource apparently does).
- I called the OEM this morning and they told me, very specifically that there were "100 homes on the PRIORITY LIST" and that MR and Sunrise were in the top 4. Power is supposed to be on by midnight tonight, but of course, "no promises."
- There were trucks around forest/Parade Hill but then they left and there are still generators on and no optimum service at all!
- Gerrish still Out. One frail senior, two newborns and one child with special needs.
- Green Ave - elderly, newborns, disabled children with special needs
- Cheesespring - mom with newborn had to throw away freezer full breast milk
- Comment by customer (unknown address): Why is Eversource not reimbursing us for the contents of our refrigerators and freezers that we had to throw out?! I have friends in NY and NJ who were out less than half the amount I was who are getting reimbursed.