

1 STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
2 PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION AND  
3 NEW HAMPSHIRE HOMELAND SECURITY  
4 & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

5  
6 April 16, 2009 - 7:08 p.m.  
7 100 West Street  
8 Milford High School  
9 Milford, New Hampshire

10 RE: DECEMBER 2008 ICE STORM REVIEW  
11 Hearing to receive public statements.

12  
13 PRESENT: Chairman Thomas B. Getz, Presiding (NHPUC)  
14 Commissioner Graham J. Morrison (NHPUC)  
15 Commissioner Clifton C. Below (NHPUC)  
16 Asst. Director Kathy Doult (HS&EM)

17 ALSO PRESENT: Reptg. the New Hampshire PUC Staff:  
18 Randall Knepper, Director - Safety Division  
19 Jody O'Marra, Safety Division

20 Reptg. Residential Ratepayers:  
21 Meredith Hatfield, Esq., Consumer Advocate  
22 Office of Consumer Advocate

23 Reptg. NH Homeland Security & Emergency Mgt.:  
24 James C. Van Dongen, Public Information Off.

25 Court Reporter: Steven E. Patnaude, LCR No. 52

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I N D E X

PAGE NO.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY:

Robert McGettigan

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Peg Hatfield

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## 1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Okay. Good evening,  
3 everyone. I'm going to open the public statement hearing  
4 this evening regarding the December 2008 ice storm. My  
5 name is Tom Getz. I'm Chairman of the Public Utilities  
6 Commission. On my right is Clifton Below, who is a  
7 Commissioner at the PUC, and on my left is Graham  
8 Morrison, who is also a Commissioner at the Public  
9 Utilities Commission. And, on my far left is Kathy Doult,  
10 who is the Assistant Director of the Division of Homeland  
11 Security & Emergency Management for the State of New  
12 Hampshire. I also note that Randy Knepper, the Director  
13 of our Safety Division is here, as is Jim Van Dongen, from  
14 Emergency Management, and the Consumer Advocate, Meredith  
15 Hatfield is also here, and, in the doorway, is Jody  
16 O'Marra, who is also from the Commission's Safety  
17 Division.

18 The public statement hearing this  
19 evening is a joint effort by the Public Utilities  
20 Commission and Emergency Management as part of our after  
21 action review of the ice storm, which will review the  
22 preparedness and response both of public utilities and  
23 State government to the ice storm, that began on the  
24 evening of December 11, affected approximately 60 percent

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1 of New Hampshire customers at its peak, and resulted in  
2 some customers going without service for as long as two  
3 weeks.

4 In very general terms, an after action  
5 review is focused on analyzing what happened, why it  
6 happened, and how it can be done better. And, in order to  
7 effectively analyze what happened, we have begun by  
8 systematically gathering data. And, that effort began  
9 during the ice storm, and the PUC has submitted three sets  
10 of data requests, interrogatories, and requests for  
11 documents to the public utilities in this state, asking  
12 over 400 questions. And, those questions and answers are  
13 available on our website, at [www.puc.nh.gov](http://www.puc.nh.gov). There's  
14 also, on our website, public statement/comment forms.  
15 And, we have over 150 of those that have been submitted  
16 and are available for review on our website.

17 In addition, the hearing tonight, and  
18 nine others that have been scheduled around the state, are  
19 part of our information-gathering effort. And, we expect,  
20 through these experiences and hearing from customers, that  
21 we will hear experiences and recommendations for  
22 corrective measures that will help us in identifying  
23 issues and deciding on specific courses of action. And,  
24 there are some other steps that are being taken by

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1 Emergency Management. They have had a series of meetings  
2 with local public officials and community officials around  
3 the state. And, there's been a review process for State  
4 agencies as well. And, Assistant Director Doutt will  
5 describe those efforts in a moment. One other effort that  
6 is happening is the House Science, Technology & Energy  
7 Committee is holding an informational session on the  
8 potential costs and benefits of undergrounding utility  
9 services in New Hampshire.

10 One other effort that the PUC is  
11 concentrating on is facilitating a review of utility  
12 communication practices. This includes communications to  
13 the -- by utilities to the PUC, to State Emergency  
14 Management, to local Emergency Management Directors, and  
15 to the public generally. And, the goal of this effort is  
16 to identify model practices that should be adopted by all  
17 utilities. At the same time, there are other issues that  
18 we will be looking at, and that will include tree-trimming  
19 with respect to customer outages, the status of mutual aid  
20 arrangements, prioritization of restoration, and decisions  
21 on allocating work crews. Depending on what emerges, the  
22 PUC can proceed in a number of directions, including  
23 rulemakings and formal adjudications.

24 We have not reached any specific  
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1 conclusions at this point. And, that is because our job  
2 is to take an objective look at all of the facts. But I  
3 can state that we will follow the information we receive  
4 wherever it leaves. And, we have a couple of goals in  
5 mind. One is that we will issue a report in September  
6 that will set forth the results of our after action  
7 review, including recommendations for specific  
8 proceedings. And, another is to make sure that the  
9 utilities have improved their planning and response  
10 protocols, especially as it concerns communications, prior  
11 to next winter.

12 So, with that, I guess, Assistant  
13 Director Douth, if you could say a few words about your  
14 agency's activities.

15 ASST. DIRECTOR DOUTH: Thank you,  
16 Commissioner. As Commissioner Getz has said, Homeland  
17 Security & Emergency Management has started on a statewide  
18 effort to collect information from our governments, our  
19 local governments, our first responders, fire, police, and  
20 everyone who was involved in the ice storm and providing  
21 services to their citizens. We've also gathered 40 local  
22 after action reports. We've gathered after action reports  
23 from public agencies. We've attended those local public  
24 safety meetings that Commissioner Getz referenced,

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1 legislative committees. Jim has brought in the news  
2 media, and actually had an after action meeting with the  
3 news media and the rest of the public information officers  
4 of the state. We brought in the Emergency Operations  
5 Center staff and had a debrief for an after action just of  
6 that location. And, we've also brought in several  
7 business sector groups, for example, New Hampshire  
8 Association of Engineers. And, we'll be synthesizing all  
9 of that information and developing from that a State  
10 Improvement Plan. It's the biggest effort that we have  
11 ever made that we know of for a disaster in New Hampshire.  
12 From all of these efforts, not only will we be developing  
13 the Improvement Plan, but we'll also be revising our State  
14 Emergency Operations Plan. Obviously, all focused at  
15 giving the best service and providing the best kind of  
16 efforts that we can during any kind of a disaster, but  
17 focusing, with this one, just on what happened with the  
18 ice storm.

19 We have to remember it is the -- it was  
20 a massive operation, the largest one in many, many years,  
21 and there were major needs. Points of distribution were  
22 set up, giving people or giving towns the ability to  
23 acquire water, food, sheltering equipment, and generators  
24 for critical infrastructure within their community.

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1                   We had four fatalities statewide  
2           relative to this incident, and we shouldn't forget that.  
3           We had 200 injuries, most of which were carbon monoxide  
4           related. Fifty-nine (59) shelters were stood up across  
5           New Hampshire, housing -- with a housing capacity of over  
6           10,000 people, and that included some medical care issues.  
7           We only housed a little more than 1,500 people. For the  
8           first time, there were 17 pet-friendly shelters in New  
9           Hampshire, which is a big stride for this state. And,  
10          we've learned lessons that people will not leave their  
11          homes if they don't know what's going to happen to their  
12          pets. And, it's a difficult thing for towns to put their  
13          arms around. But I give them all the -- a lot of credit,  
14          they have done that. People have been serving their  
15          populations who have special needs with greater interest.  
16          And, I think that that's probably even going to improve  
17          after that. That's one of the groups that's also being  
18          asked "how were you served during this particular  
19          disaster?"

20                   So, I'll remain after this meeting, if  
21          you choose to not say what is on your mind publicly, but  
22          want to address something to me, for Homeland Security &  
23          Emergency Management specifically. And, thanks for coming  
24          and joining us tonight.

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1                   CHAIRMAN GETZ: Okay. Thank you.  
2           Mr. McGettigan, I think you're the only one who signed up  
3           to speak.

4                   MR. McGETTIGAN: I guess the only one  
5           who signed up here. I guess it was not a surprise that  
6           the Public Service was unable to handle this, this outage.  
7           It was a tremendous outage. But the people who knew the  
8           Company were not at all surprised. If you talk to people  
9           who worked for the Company, middle management people, the  
10          last -- who worked their 20 years or 30 years, and watched  
11          the Company go downhill, and, when they made suggestions  
12          were told "Don't say anything. Do what you're told."  
13          And, so, I think the way you're going to get to the real  
14          bottom of this is to talk to people who were the heart of  
15          that company the last 10, 15, 20 years, who are there and  
16          still communicate with people, people who are there who  
17          want to get out of the company. And, they're looking for  
18          retirement. And, people, you know, figured they would,  
19          when they left, they would have an exit interview to find  
20          out what their ideas were and so forth, and there was none  
21          of this.

22                   Now, here, locally, I stopped at one of  
23          the local -- one of the local malls and saw Public Service  
24          -- not Public Service trucks, but trucks from New York

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1 State, they were stopped, I see the guys. I went by three  
2 hours later they're still sitting there. I went by an  
3 hour later, they were still there. So, I went and talked  
4 to the guys, "What are you guys doing?" They said "We'd  
5 like to get to work, but -- and we told them, "if they  
6 don't tell us what to do, we're going back to Buffalo".  
7 And, the next day, and they were still there. And, this  
8 was going -- I mean, if you talk to some of the -- and,  
9 because, see, some of the guys who had retired had gone  
10 back to work with the Company. And, so, they were talking  
11 to people. So, this was common. There were other places  
12 around, it was similar, with trucks sitting for hours and  
13 not being called out. And, there was -- there would need  
14 to be, the need was there. And, they said, you know, "we  
15 don't want to."

16 So, I don't think you're going to get to  
17 the bottom of this unless you talk to people who are  
18 really in the heart of the -- the middle management  
19 people. And, if you got a hold of people who worked there  
20 the last 10 or 15 years, and talk to people what's going  
21 on now, you'll see the deterioration of the quality of  
22 their company.

23 CHAIRMAN GETZ: When you're talking  
24 about the trucks, you're talking mostly about out-of-state

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1 trucks that were just --

2 MR. McGETTIGAN: Yes, out-of-state  
3 trucks. Six, eight trucks one day, another day there  
4 were, you know, and you talk to these guys, and they were  
5 frustrated because they -- "we came here to work, and we  
6 don't know where to go and what to do."

7 So, that's about all. I mean, I can't  
8 complain, I was only out for a few hours. My brother was  
9 out for nine or ten days. I live here in Milford, so I  
10 was only out for a few hours. So, you know, we had a warm  
11 house, and provided food for neighbors and everybody else  
12 and so forth, but that was about all. But, you know, I  
13 appreciate you people coming out. And, I know it's  
14 frustrating coming out at night, and you don't know what  
15 you're going to get, two or three people here, and  
16 everybody has something on their mind. And, you know, so  
17 that's all I have to say.

18 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Thank you. Ms.  
19 Hatfield.

20 MS. HATFIELD: Yes. I live here in  
21 Milford. And, we had lost our electricity for ten days.  
22 We do have a generator. Well, we had a generator in the  
23 beginning, which died, and we got another one luckily. I  
24 think the main problem that we had was listening mainly to

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1 the TV at night, and they would say, you know, "Milford  
2 will be totally back on line tomorrow." And, then, the  
3 next night it would be, you know, it just went on and on  
4 and on for days. So, that was frustrating.

5 And, I really think that the people, the  
6 men who came here to restore electricity did an  
7 unbelievable job. I know it took a long time, but, when  
8 you saw the wires like that and the poles like that and  
9 the trees down, and it was freezing cold. And, I can't  
10 even imagine working up on lines in that weather, and  
11 sleeping on cots at Hampshire Hills, and, you know, being  
12 out till midnight or 1:00 in the morning. I think all  
13 that part of it was a tremendous job. But I just think  
14 that communication about what was going on was lacking.  
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Thank you. Is there  
17 anyone else who would like to speak this evening?

18 (No verbal response)

19 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Okay. Hearing nothing,  
20 then I guess I'll note for the record it's 7:20. So, we  
21 will -- I'll stay around for a short while. But it looks  
22 like, for all intents and purposes, the public statement  
23 hearing for this evening is closed. So, thank you for  
24 coming out.

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1 MR. McGETTIGAN: Yes. Thank you for  
2 coming.

3 (Whereupon the hearing ended at 7:21  
4 p.m.)

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