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STATE OF NEW YORK
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Case 06-M-1078 - Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to Audit the Performance of Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. In Response to Outage Emergencies.

Case 06-E-1158 - In the Matter of Staff's Investigation of Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc.'s Performance During and Following the July and September Electric Utility Outages.

Public Statement Hearing
City Hall
515 North Avenue
New Rochelle, New York

October 11, 2006
2:00 p.m.

PRESIDING:

ELEANOR STEIN,
Administrative Law Judge

Reported by: Jeanne O'Connell, R.P.R.
(518) 271-7904

ORIGINAL

1 JUDGE STEIN: This is a public statement hearing
2 in cases 06-M-0178, the Proceeding on Motion of the
3 Commission to audit the performance of Consolidated
4 Edison Company of New York, Inc., in response to outage
5 emergencies, and 06-E-1158, in the matter of staff's
6 investigation of Consolidated Edison Company of New York
7 Inc.'s performance during and following the July and
8 September 2006 electric utility outages.

9 We are in New Rochelle Town Hall on Wednesday,
10 October 11, 2006 at 2:05 p.m. and are ready to take
11 statements from members of the public concerning issues
12 related to the power outages in July and September 2006.

13 At this time no speakers have registered to
14 participate in the hearing and so we are going to simply
15 wait off the record until some speakers do appear. If
16 not, we will adjourn at three p.m.

17 (Recess taken.)

18 Let me introduce this hearing a little bit more
19 formally than I just did going on the record. My name
20 is Eleanor Stein. I am an Administrative Law Judge at
21 the New York State Public Service Commission and I am
22 going to be presiding over this public statement
23 hearing.

24 We are on a stenographic record and our court
25 reporter will take down what you have to say. Please

1 keep her in mind when you are speaking so she can get an
2 accurate record. And everything said here today will be
3 placed in the record of the Public Service Commission
4 proceedings that are considering the matters here today,
5 the investigations into Con Edison's performance during
6 and following the July and September electric utility
7 outages.

8 We appreciate your appearance, and I am going to
9 call the speakers in the order in which they arrived.
10 And we will keep this hearing open until 3:00 unless
11 there are more speakers than appear to be here, and in
12 which case we will keep it open until everyone has had
13 an opportunity to speak.

14 The purpose of this hearing is for us to listen
15 to you and to add to the official record of these cases
16 and hear the views of customers and residents and others
17 in the Westchester community who were affected by the
18 outages.

19 In addition, representatives from Con Edison are
20 here today, if people have questions for them off the
21 record. And there are representatives of the Public
22 Service Commission staff who are available to speak to
23 people about the issues that are under investigation
24 currently.

25 In addition, if you prefer not to speak but would

1 like to register your concerns with the Commission, our
2 staff members at the table outside this room have forms
3 available for you to register your views with the
4 Commission either in letter form, on the telephone, or
5 via e-mail, whichever you prefer, and those comments and
6 letters also will be considered part of the formal
7 record of these proceedings and will be taken into
8 consideration by the Commission as it makes its
9 decisions on these matters.

10 So that said, let me begin by giving the floor to
11 Mayor Noam Bramson. Appreciate your appearing today for
12 this.

13 MAYOR BRAMSON: Judge Stein, ladies and
14 gentlemen. Good afternoon. My name is Noam Bramson. I
15 am the Mayor of New Rochelle. I thank the Public
16 Service Commission for holding today's hearing.

17 Tropical Storm Ernesto disrupted power for almost
18 half of Con Edison's customers in New Rochelle, many of
19 whom remained without power for several days. Thousands
20 of other residents had previously endured extended
21 outages during storm or heat events earlier in the year.

22 Following these experiences, city officials met
23 with Con Ed representatives to assess means of more
24 swiftly and efficiently restoring service and of
25 enhancing communication. While a number of improvements

1 resulted from these conversations, far more must be
2 done.

3 Therefore, on behalf of the citizens of New
4 Rochelle, I ask the Public Service Commission for the
5 following: First, please explore thoroughly the manner
6 in which Con Edison assembles and deploys its personnel
7 and equipment resources in preparation for and response
8 to emergency conditions. In the aftermath of Ernesto,
9 we were troubled by the apparently inadequate size of
10 Con Ed's available workforce and concluded that
11 insufficient coverage was responsible for substantial
12 delays in restoration of power.

13 Second, please encourage Con Edison to explore
14 means of better securing its infrastructure, so that it
15 is less vulnerable to weather events. The
16 undergrounding of utility lines is, of course, an
17 expensive undertaking, but the maintenance and aesthetic
18 benefits of doing so justify research into its
19 feasibility, on either a total or partial basis. Even a
20 pilot effort aimed at main arterials could prove very
21 beneficial.

22 Third, and perhaps most importantly, please
23 investigate the process Con Ed employs to collect and
24 disseminate information. In my experience, residents
25 can endure hardships and inconveniences if they are

1 given the tools and information to plan around them.

2 Unfortunately, Con Ed has proven largely unable
3 to provide either citizens or public officials with
4 accurate, timely information on the status of work
5 orders or power restoration schedules.

6 I suggest that Con Edison's internal tracking of
7 outages be reorganized to facilitate the gathering and
8 distribution of such information in the most user
9 friendly fashion possible. This single step would do
10 the most to restore public trust in Con Ed's capacity to
11 address emergencies and engage our community with
12 respect.

13 In this regard, let me note that we in the City
14 of New Rochelle are ready and able to do our part. We
15 will continue to collect the detailed information from
16 residents who reach out to us. We will continue to
17 provide staff to assist in identifying priorities
18 throughout our city.

19 And we will continue to share our knowledge of
20 our community in the way that is most helpful to you and
21 to Con Ed. We appreciate that Con Ed has renewed the
22 practice of assigning a municipal representative to our
23 community and recognize the great value of such a
24 position. Now, we need to ensure that our municipal
25 reps have access to all of the information, in real

1 time, that they need to do their jobs well.

2 Finally, let me take this opportunity to
3 compliment and thank the many technicians, drivers, and
4 laborers who came to the aid of our community this year.
5 Without exception, we found the men and women in the
6 field to be highly professional, courteous, and
7 public-spirited, and we are grateful for their efforts.

8 I and our city staff stand ready to assist the
9 Public Service Commission in its essential work and, if
10 it would be helpful, to provide you with more detailed
11 information about our experiences.

12 Once again, my thanks for your presence today. I
13 hope we can work together to improve service for the
14 people we represent.

15 Thank you so much.

16 JUDGE STEIN: Thank you. Our next speaker is
17 James Barrechia.

18 MR. BARRECHIA: Thank you. I just have a couple
19 of brief comments. I would like to echo what the mayor
20 said about the response of the guys in the field during
21 the aftermath of Ernesto. I, too, drove around my
22 neighborhood and spoke to them and they were polite and
23 courteous, and I know that they were all working very
24 hard and that response is appreciated.

25 I do have one additional comment about the

1 infrastructure of the power system in my neighborhood.
2 And that is, if you look up you can really start to see
3 the sad state of affairs of the power infrastructure
4 that we are dealing with here.

5 Just in a one mile radius to my house you see
6 trees that clearly are at risk of creating further havoc
7 with the power. You can see telephone poles. I know
8 there is one about three blocks from my house that is
9 broken and cracked and chained together for the last two
10 years. I don't know when those things are going to be
11 fixed.

12 I know it's a big undertaking, but the
13 infrastructure in my part of the county is excessively
14 aged, and I think that we really or Con Ed, rather,
15 really needs to get their act together with respect to
16 upgrading. Whether that means burying, like the Mayor
17 said, or just getting out and fixing some of the crooked
18 and leaning poles.

19 I don't believe that Con Ed is responsible for
20 the trees around the poles, I believe the township is, I
21 am not certain of that, but I believe that that's the
22 case.

23 My last question that I would have would be: How
24 do I as a citizen know that my town is doing everything
25 that they need to do to maintain the landscaping around

1 the power infrastructure? I think most of the problems
2 in my neighborhood actually were caused by falling
3 trees.

4 I would like to know and be able to follow up
5 with whoever is supposed to maintain that, and what Con
6 Edison's opinion about that is. Do they go out and
7 survey? What do they actually do to ensure that their
8 infrastructure is safe and maintenance items in
9 particular that isn't their responsibility?

10 That's all I have. Thank you.

11 JUDGE STEIN: Those are the only speakers we have
12 so far. We will take a break.

13 (Recess taken.)

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PAULIN: Amy Paulin, State
15 Legislator, Assemblymember for this area, representing
16 New Rochelle, Scarsdale, Eastchester, Bronxville,
17 Tuckahoe, White Plains, Pelham and Pelham Manor.

18 I just want to go on record that I appreciate the
19 hearing very much because my constituents in the 80th
20 Assembly District have suffered tremendously due to the
21 three outages, the one in February and the two over the
22 summer. And what was unusual about these outages was
23 the length of time that it took for the power to be
24 restored. It was as much as five days.

25 There were problems in communicating to Con

1 Edison. There were problems in misinformation that was
2 given to people. And we just want to make sure that the
3 Public Service Commission holds the utility accountable
4 going forward so that we are not going to have to face
5 those kinds of problems.

6 We do not feel satisfied that the answers that we
7 have been given go to the root of the problem. For
8 example, that it's simply a function of unusual
9 circumstances, natural disasters, unusual storms.

10 We have had these kinds of--there is just too
11 much in such a short period of time. There is just too
12 much that's happened. In my six years of being a
13 legislator I cannot remember a time where we had these
14 kinds of issues. So, I feel unconvinced that it's just
15 natural circumstances. I feel very much that we need to
16 look at the service going forward.

17 So, I appreciate your being here. I realize it's
18 very difficult for many of the constituents in the area.
19 They are all commuters. They all work in New York City.
20 They also have gone to numerous other hearings. I don't
21 want you to think that their not being here is a
22 reflection on the lack of a problem, because I can
23 assure you my office received hundreds of phone calls
24 and the next time the power is out we will receive them
25 again.

1 So, again, please do what you can to help this
2 community. Thank you.

3 JUDGE STEIN: Thank you very much. It is now
4 3:00 p.m. and there being no additional speakers this
5 public statement hearing has come to a close. Thank
6 you.

7 (Public statement hearing adjourned.)

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