



Public Service Commission

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Rory M. Christian, Chair

Contact:

James Denn | James.Denn@dps.ny.gov | (518) 474-7080

<http://www.dps.ny.gov>

<http://twitter.com/NYSDPS>

23095/23-E-0443

NYSEG to Pay \$1.86 Million for Storm-Related Customer Fatality

Chenango County Resident Died After Touching Live Electric Wire

Payment is Maximum Amount Allowed Under Commission Enforcement Regulations

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today adopted the terms of a \$1,864,384 settlement agreement with New York State Electric and Gas Corporation, or NYSEG, for the company’s alleged failure to safeguard the public in Chenango County from a downed, live electric wire, the maximum amount allowed under Commission regulations for four violations. As part of the agreement, the utility will also update its employee training materials to help prevent future occurrences.

“The Commission’s paramount concern is public safety and the integrity of the electric systems in New York State,” **said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian.** “The financial settlement approved today reflects the maximum payment amount allowed under state law. Coupled with the changes being made to the utility’s training materials, this decision sends a strong signal to deter and prevent any future incidents.”

On April 18, 2022, NYSEG customers experienced outages due to a winter storm. Some parts of the Binghamton Division received up to 15 inches of snow. The next morning, on April 19, a resident of the Village of Oxford, Chenango County, notified the utility of a downed wire. On April 20, NYSEG assigned an employee to act as a wire guard to ensure the public’s safety.

A Department of Public Service investigation concluded that shortly after the NYSEG employee responded to the downed wire, he left the site, incorrectly believing that the wire was de-energized. Staff alleged that the area was not barricaded, the wire was not made safe, and a make-safe crew was not sent to the location at that time. Later that day, a village resident made contact with the downed wire, and subsequently perished.

Upon receiving notice of the incident, Department staff immediately began an investigation. Information requests were sent to the company and witness interviews were conducted. Upon conclusion of the investigation, Department staff determined that safety-related violations had occurred, including the company’s failure to identify the severity level of the downed wire. Further, the company’s emergency response plan states that it is the responsibility of the wire guard to remain on site until the situation is determined to be made safe.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, NYSEG agreed to resolve all alleged violations and NYSEG shareholders agreed to pay \$1,864,384. The money shall be used for ratepayer benefit. In addition, the settlement agreement requires NYSEG to update its training documents and training materials.

Today's decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number 23-E-0443 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.