



## ***ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY***

Storm Response Informational Hearing  
November 15, 2017

Good Afternoon, my name is Donna Hamzy, Advocacy Manager for CCM, Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government – your partners in governing Connecticut.

I appreciate this opportunity to discuss preparation and response assessments related to the recent 2017 Halloween storms.

Municipal officials were given a challenging test by Mother Nature– a test we have been preparing for. CCM and its membership would like to first acknowledge the tremendous efforts undertaken by our local public works departments and first responders in the days, weeks, and months prior to this storm, the efforts during storm and the tedious cleanup work that followed. We are grateful to all of our dedicated staff who protected our residents during this storm.

This storm affected towns and cities in many different ways. Some community's residents were hit hard and experienced days of power outages while others were less affected and quite satisfied with restoration efforts. On behalf of our membership, we appreciate the opportunity to share our local experiences with you today in the spirit of working together as local and state partners to better prepare our communities when future natural disasters come our way again.

### *Improvements for Consideration:*

While overall feedback indicated that some expectations were reasonably met, respondents also commented on the need for improvement, particularly regarding the coordination and process of restoring services.

#### Overall **coordination/communication between municipality and utility needs improvement:**

- Utility liaison program is improved, but functionality during real events is still inconsistent. In particular:
  - Liaisons lacked autonomous decision-making and command authority over line crews;
  - Municipal and utility coordination in regards to “vital areas for restoration” are agreed to, however not acted upon during an event;

- Providing a process for the submission of reports (utility liaison to utility EOC) when emails and phones are not working; and
- In many instances, responsiveness in sharing restoration, priority, and GIS data with local officials was not timely and inaccurate.
- Placement of utility crews available and ready to perform “make safe” and/or restoration service. There is a growing concern amongst municipal officials utility crews are not prepared to complete work once they are in the town or city. Crews should be in place to be prepared to perform service immediately when they are in town and the weather event has diminished.
- Better coordination between utilities/municipalities/State DOT on road clearing. Many towns found that local integration of utility crews with local public works crews were effective, but were unsure how successful integration was between utility crews and State DOT crews.

Some suggestions for improvement:

- **Strengthen real-time communication, between individual municipal CEOs and their corresponding recovery crews (utility crew supervisors, tree removal crews, local Public Works and utility line crews). Additionally, improving the information that Municipal Liaisons have to share with their municipalities while also giving them more authority on the ground.** A common concern was the inability for these different disciplines of restoration to communicate among each other. This inability was cited as one of the main causes for delays in the restoration of local services.
- **Establish a “strike team” model of communication that (1) deploys restoration assets (the various field crews) and outlines a definitive chain-of-command within in the field, (2) equips designated leaders in the field with adequate communication capabilities (interoperable radios), and (3) conducts regularly scheduled reports directly to local EOCs.** Such a recommendation could build off the “utility liaisons” program which was identified by a majority of local officials as being beneficial to the recovery process. In addition, utility liaisons’ authorities and responsibilities should be more clearly defined in order to be more effective. Utility liaisons should also be included earlier in the local emergency management planning process – from preparation to response to recovery.
- Provide more effective communication that is specific, timely and accurate. Officials see the need to **improve the collection and dissemination of local utility data, possibly via GIS mapping capabilities** (i.e., the location of major circuits/substations in relation to local priority restoration points – correlated with the specific causes and locations of power outages). Local officials’ real-time access to such information could provide their field crews with a concrete game plan for restoration. If such a blueprint were in place – combined with the ability to communicate among all field disciplines – then local recovery efforts could be more efficient, and information to residents on the progress (or lack thereof) could be more effective.

Overall, true partnerships need to be strengthened now between local officials and their private utility counterparts so together, as a team; we are better prepared to protect the residents of Connecticut. The old adage rings true today more than ever before that the time to exchange business cards is not at the scene of an emergency.

As Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities, CCM is willing to help facilitate a strengthening of these partnerships among all local, regional, state and private sector officials.

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If you have any questions, please contact Donna Hamzy, Advocacy Manager of CCM at (203) 843-0705 or via email at [dhamzy@ccm-ct.org](mailto:dhamzy@ccm-ct.org).