



Testimony from Norwich Public Utilities

Energy and Technology Committee

Connecticut General Assembly

Thursday, August 27, 2020

Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti and members of the General Assembly's Energy and Technology Committee, my name is Chris LaRose and I am the General Manager of Norwich Public Utilities.

To provide some background for those of you who are unfamiliar with NPU, we are a four-service public utility, providing natural gas, water, electric and wastewater services for a city of 40,000. We also provide water and wastewater service to our neighboring communities.

I am very proud to lead a team of 146 hard-working and dedicated employees. Our annual budget is approximately \$100 million, with 10% of gross revenues from our natural gas, electric and water divisions returned to City's General Fund each year; this totaled \$8.9 million last year and more than \$81.7 million over the past ten years.

NPU was recently recognized by the American Public Gas Association – one of just 26 out of 700 APGA members – for excellence in system integrity, system improvement, employee safety and workforce development.

We were also among 118 of the nation's more than 2,000 public power utilities that earned the Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) designation from the American Public Power Association (APPA) for providing reliable and safe electric service.

I am happy to share with you the following information on our response to the significant tropical storm that impacted the state earlier this month.

For context, by City Charter, NPU provides electricity for Norwich, which is approximately 30 square miles. And in a community of 40,000, we have just over 21,000 electric customers.

As Hurricane Isaias began to form and head toward New England in late July, NPU began our standard pre-storm precautions:

- Reviewing and confirming all of our operational checklists
- Confirming adequate materials, equipment, personnel were in place

- Providing refresher training as appropriate for employees working on spotting, lines down, and safety; *our employees are cross-trained, with everyone in the organization able to contribute during an emergency situation.*
- We initiated our outreach for Mutual Aid through the New England Public Power Association
- We secured the support of private tree contractors
- The Emergency Operations Centers for both the City of Norwich and NPU were put on stand-by
- To raise public awareness and promote public safety, we issued a news release and posted on social media information on of our pre-storm preparations (July 31, August 3, August 4).

In Norwich, the tropical storm hit at about 2:00 pm on Tuesday, August 4. This was a fast-moving storm with very strong winds and but with limited rain. Our preliminary assessment once the storm passed indicated that we had approximately 7,500 customers out of service and there was very significant tree damage throughout Norwich.

Once it was safe to work, our team of 12 linemen and General Line Foreman began our restoration efforts, and reduced the number of customers out of service to 6,000 customers by Tuesday evening. By Wednesday morning, this number was down to 4,000.

NPU secured assistance of five mutual aid crews and a supervisor from Massachusetts through the New England Public Power Association (NEPPA) to assist with restoration. These crews were in place before noon on Wednesday, August 5.

By this time, our outages were down to about 2,500 customers and at the end of the day, approximately 1,000 NPU customers were out of service.

At 10:00 am On Thursday, August 6, less than 800 customers were out of service; 500 were out of service at 3:00 pm, and 200 were out of service at 8:00 pm.

On Friday, August 7, we had 80 customers out of service at 10:00 am and everyone restored by about 3:00 pm

As part of our standard protocol, we provided regular updates to the NPU Board, our employees, the Norwich Mayor and City Council, commercial customers, as well as local and statewide media throughout the storm on our restoration efforts.

We reached out to our customers with 22 Facebook posts to provide specific information on where our crews were working, overall restoration progress, and important safety information. Over the seven days before, during and after the storm, these posts reached a collective audience of more than 146,000.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our story. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.