



Hamden Alliance for Trees
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Commissioners Marissa Gillett, John Betkoski III, Michael Caron
Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority

Chairs Norman Needleman, David Arconti
Members Connecticut Committee on Energy and Technology

We write to you about Connecticut's experience with hurricane Isaias and the tornadic event on August 27th. Legislators, local town leaders and residents were all outraged by the poor communication they received after the storm. It is part of a pattern.

It is important to know that historically UI and Eversource have been completely uninterested in the views of their customers. Good communication seems not to have been a priority for either company. For example, discussing the program of tree pruning and removal, PURA Commissioner Caron asked:

So for all the panels just a general -- after you've gone through, after the companies have gone through, done their work, got their consents, got their objections, all that, is there any customer service follow-up to see how the customer's experience went, post-work ... were customers surveyed?

THE WITNESS (Dave Goodson of UI): No. Not at the UI, no.

THE WITNESS (Carey): Not at Eversource.¹

This lack of concern for customer satisfaction is unacceptable and is indicative of the disdain these two companies have for their customers and the towns they "serve".

UI's failure to seek customer feedback has been an ongoing serious concern of HAT which we have addressed with both the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) and the CT legislature in the past. In 2019, HB 5312 addressed this problem. It was passed in the House, but not considered by the Senate.

Currently UI has one person with the responsibilities of managing their tree work and also handling customer requests and complaints. As that person is necessarily often in the field, communications are challenging.

Repeatedly HAT has urged PURA to require a tear-off satisfaction survey as part of the utilities' door hanger notification. That survey would be returned directly to PURA. This should result in higher quality tree work. It should mean that the work the property owner requested and that was

1 PURA 2019 Biennial Report to the General Assembly Concerning its Review of Each Electric Distribution Company's Vegetation Management Practices, May 17, 2019, Docket 19-01-25 p. 48.

agreed to by the utility company was indeed performed. It is time for this to be considered seriously.

At present, the process of contacting PURA is unfamiliar and often daunting to people who are not expert in utility matters. Without making it unreasonably burdensome to staff, surely this can be improved.

Quality customer service includes both recognizing and committing to the protection of our natural world and providing excellent communication with the utilities' customers. This must become a legislative and PURA priority when reviewing the performance of the utilities. Our futures and survival of our planet are at issue.

Sincerely,
Diane Hoffman
Ralph Jones
Hamden Alliance for Trees