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STATE OF NEW YORK
MORELAND COMMISSION

UTILITY STORM PREPARATION AND RESPONSE

LOCATION: 2634 Main Street
Lake Placid, New York

DATE: February 20, 2013

CO-CHAIRMAN: BENJAMIN LAWSKY

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2

APPEARANCES:

3

BOARD MEMBERS:

4 Regina Calcaterra, Executive Director

Leka Gjonaj

5 Tony Collins

Christian Bonvin

6 Sean Mullany

7 SPEAKERS:

8 Keith Zimmerman

Don Jaquiss

9 Randy Preston

Rick Provost

10 Brian LaFlure

Eric Day

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2 (The hearing commenced at 6:07
3 p.m.)

4 MR. LAWSKY: Okay. So welcome
5 everyone to the Moreland Commission hearing. I
6 believe this is our eighth hearing thus far. It's
7 great to be here with you on a wintry evening in
8 Lake -- beautiful Lake Placid, and I want to thank
9 you all for coming. The Moreland Commission, as
10 you know, was established by the governor, Governor
11 Cuomo, and we are tasked with really looking
12 closely at the performance of utilities after
13 disasters, storms, et cetera.

14 We've obviously been focused in
15 our early months on downstate where Superstorm
16 Sandy was very crushing, but it's, you know, no
17 secret to all of you or to any of us that little
18 over a year ago there were big, big issues here and
19 in these -- in this region post-Irene mostly, and
20 that was a very significant storm and had
21 incredible impacts. I remember spending time
22 personally in Jay, Upper Jay, and in Keene. And we
23 are really trying to look at in -- after all those
24 storms what went wrong, why did it go wrong, and --

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2 and how do we fix it as it relates to utilities.

3 And -- and most of all, even if
4 ultimately in this region or in other regions not
5 affected by Superstorm Sandy should we find that
6 utilities performed well, we and this governor very
7 much want to study how we can continue as a state
8 to get better and better at preparing for and then
9 responding to the storms because they're going to
10 continue. And they're going to get worse and it's
11 only a matter of time before we have another storm
12 that doesn't hit downstate but does hit upstate,
13 and we'll be back up here once again responding and
14 trying to respond better than we ever have before
15 to that storm.

16 So very much looking forward to
17 this hearing tonight. I want to thank very much
18 Co-commissioner Tony Collins, the president of
19 Clarkson University for being here and making the
20 trip. Kathleen Rice, who is the D.A. of Nassau
21 County who has not missed a hearing and -- and she
22 does have a very important day job being a district
23 attorney on Long Island very much wanted to be here
24 but got waylaid and could not make it, but very

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2 much regrets it because she had planned to be here.

3 And, of course, Regina Calcaterra
4 to my left, our great executive director of the
5 Moreland Commission, I want to thank her. And I
6 guess I should turn it over to either Regina or
7 Tony to -- to make some remarks. Before we start
8 we'll do a little PowerPoint.

9 MS. CALCATERRA: Absolutely.

10 Well, first I'm going to defer to Commissioner --
11 to Tony Collins.

12 DR. COLLINS: Commissioner
13 Collins is alliteration there, I guess. Thank you
14 for coming out tonight. We -- as -- as Chair
15 Lawsky mentioned, we are really interested in
16 trying to connect the dots here, what worked well,
17 what didn't work well. Certainly over in Potsdam,
18 we were not affected to -- to a large extent by --
19 by Superstorm Sandy, but we have been impacted by
20 all of these events all the way back to almost a
21 decade ago -- over a decade ago with the ice storm.

22 So we understand the -- the
23 challenges of -- of nature and -- and we really do
24 want to hear the good, the bad, and the ugly,

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2 what -- what worked, what didn't work, so that we
3 can translate that in -- into -- into -- into
4 policy. And -- and I -- I want to emphasize that a
5 lot of what we've heard downstate really certainly
6 doesn't -- we've only heard glowing responses about
7 the -- the people on the ground and their
8 dedication and effort to make things better as
9 quickly as possible.

10 What we've seen is that sometimes
11 at -- at high levels the coordination of that
12 activity has left something to be desired. And so
13 any questions or concerns or any information about
14 that would -- would be very valuable to us. For my
15 part in higher education of -- obviously strong
16 connections into the higher education world, I'm
17 like -- I'm enjoying listening to this with an eye
18 to the future. What do we need to put into our
19 curricula, how do we need to train not just
20 Clarkson engineers but across the board? What do
21 we need to do so that they're better prepared to
22 deal with these kinds of circumstances?

23 Obviously I've learned
24 expressions like blue-sky days which means

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2 non-storm events, utilities operate in one
3 particular fashion. And then when you get these
4 storms, they -- the -- the switch over to operate
5 under those conditions and -- and the teamwork
6 that's necessary that the human interaction
7 suddenly becomes ramped up to a much higher level.

8 And so understanding that so that
9 we can think about how to train our engineers
10 and -- and what we need to do in that curricula
11 to -- to make them respond as -- as well as we can.
12 Help them to understand how to respond as well as
13 we can is -- is important to us. So thank you for
14 coming out. We appreciate it and we appreciate the
15 input that we'll hear tonight.

16 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you. And
17 what I also want to do is actually take an
18 opportunity to introduce others who are up here on
19 the -- on the dais with us. The Moreland
20 Commission is something that was put together in
21 November and -- when the governor issued his
22 executive order, which we'll talk about in a little
23 bit in more detail in a moment. But in order to
24 put it together, we needed to bring together

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2 expertise from across the state.

3 And we've got three Moreland
4 staff members who have quickly just changed
5 their -- turned their lives around very quickly to
6 join Moreland and to bring their expertise to the
7 interim report that we did and to the report that
8 we're going to be doing this spring. And I just
9 want to quickly introduce them as well. We have
10 Sean Mullany with us and we also have Christian
11 Bonvin, and Leka -- Leka Gjonaj as well, so they'll
12 be here on the dais this evening.

13 So I will reserve the rest of my
14 clients till we wrap up on the presentation. And
15 after we give the presentation what we're going to
16 then do is explain what the process is this evening
17 and then we'll open it up to public comments.

18 Thank you.

19 And so I'll first defer to
20 Chairman Lawsky.

21 MR. LAWSKY: Okay. So let me
22 just -- I'm going to walk you through the first
23 half of this presentation of what we found so far
24 and then Executive Director Calcaterra will take

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2 you through the second half.

3 So the Moreland Commission,
4 obviously the storm impact on electric service and
5 prior storms has been immense. Hurricane Sandy,
6 obviously two point one customer outages with a
7 restoration period of up to twenty-one days.
8 Hurricane Irene, August 11, one point one million
9 customers lost power with a restoration period of
10 up to nine days. Tropical Storm Lee, September
11 2011, sixty-eight thousand outages with a ten-day
12 restoration period, and the ice storm back in
13 December of 2008 where we had three hundred and
14 thirty thousand customer outages and a restoration
15 period of up to eight days.

16 And I know this region has dealt
17 with large outages and big storms for a long, long
18 time. I was reading on the way up -- on the drive
19 up today that back in '97, there was a very big
20 storm that had a very significant impact. So all
21 of these are really the reason we're here.

22 The Moreland Commissioner was
23 established by the governor, created pursuant to
24 the Moreland Act, Executive Law Section Six,

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2 following Sandy. The Commission's mandate is
3 twofold, first, to study, examine, investigate, and
4 review in three areas, emergency preparedness and
5 the response of utilities, the adequacy of -- of
6 the existing regulatory framework and the adequacy
7 of the existing oversight and enforcement. And
8 second, our mandate is to make recommendations for
9 reform.

10 To date, this is a summary of
11 what we've done. We've sent subpoenas to seven
12 utilities, forty letter requests seeking documents
13 and information. We've received review -- for
14 review over one hundred thousand pages of
15 documents. We've conducted many witness
16 interviews, held eight public hearings, and our
17 work is obviously continuing and will include
18 future hearings I think as soon as next week.

19 When we've taken a look, in our
20 preliminary examination, of the overall problem
21 there is a fundamental problem for utilities, which
22 is that they are natural monopolies -- monopolies
23 and thus the six utilities in New York and LIPA
24 operate as natural monopolies in their own

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2 exclusive service areas with no risk of losing all
3 or part of the territory because of what has been
4 in the past somewhat toothless government
5 oversight.

6 In our initial findings and
7 recommendations, we've presented findings in really
8 three areas, first, strengthening the state
9 oversight of utilities, second, unifying state
10 energy programs and policies wherever possible, and
11 third, restructuring light by the Long Island Power
12 Authority.

13 With respect to the Public
14 Service Commission -- and I think this is where
15 I'll turn it over to Regina.

16 MS. CALCATERRA: I'll pick it up.
17 Thank you. The -- when the governor issued the
18 executive order back in November, as Ben had
19 mentioned earlier, we had a focus and -- and the
20 focus was to investigate all the utilities around
21 the state and their response to what was classified
22 as recent storms. And those recent storms are the
23 December 2008 Ice Storm, Lee, Irene, and Sandy. So
24 we just weren't focusing on downstate; we were

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2 looking at all the utilities across the board,
3 which is what brings us up here as well.

4 We also, by way of the executive
5 order, were charged with taking a look at the state
6 energy agencies and determining whether or not they
7 need a strengthening or whether or not there were
8 redundancies or efficiencies that needed to be
9 addressed. And, of course, we -- we also were
10 charged with taking a look at LIPA.

11 And in early January, we shared
12 with the governor our interim report. And the
13 reason why we did an interim report in early
14 January, even though we're not done with our
15 investigation yet, is because we wanted to benefit
16 from the legislative calendar. There was -- there
17 was a lot of focus on what happened downstate
18 during Sandy. There needed to be some legislative
19 changes and we also found out that there not only
20 needed to be some changes made to the Long Island
21 Power Authority down in Nassau, Suffolk, and
22 partially in Queens, but also to the Public Service
23 Commission.

24 So through our investigation of

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2 the -- in the -- in the short term, we realized
3 that a lot of the -- a lot of the problems that the
4 state was facing with the utilities and to try to
5 get them to provide a better response towards
6 storms is that our state regulatory agency that
7 oversees them was basically toothless. It didn't
8 have the ability to enforce orders or enforce their
9 regulations that other agencies that are similar to
10 the Public Service Commission that are in
11 contiguous states around New York have.

12 So by way of our interim report,
13 we made recommendation on LIPA. We investigated
14 LIPA, but we also made recommendations how to
15 strengthen the P.S.C. and that's about what I'm
16 going to into. And what we did is, by way of
17 timing, when we provided the governor with our
18 report on January 7th, he then took our
19 recommendations and put them in the State of the
20 State Address, and then went further and actually
21 put in a budget bill that is a bill within -- when
22 he made his budget recommendation in late January
23 to make the recommendations that we have suggested
24 in the budget.

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2 And we're hoping that those --
3 that that bill, you know, stays intact as much as
4 it possibly can be to be adopted by August -- by
5 April 1st by the time the new budget is going to be
6 adopted for the next fiscal year. So those are the
7 recommendations that we're about to go through at
8 this point.

9 To -- basically one of the things
10 that we found through our investigation is that
11 right -- is that in order for the P.S.C., the
12 Public Service Commission to -- to go after the
13 utilities and -- and -- and, you know, penalize
14 them for failing to do something, they have to
15 first take them to court. Second, if they take
16 them to court, they have a very high bar to prove
17 and they've got to -- that bar is -- knowingly that
18 they have to -- they have to prove that the
19 utilities knowingly failed to do something. And
20 third, once they get them to court, the penalties
21 would be about a hundred thousand dollars a day.
22 And since most -- most of our utilities in the
23 state are -- are publicly traded and privately
24 held, a hundred thousand dollar a day penalty isn't

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2 much. It's basically the cost of doing business
3 and it doesn't provide a tremendous incentive.

4 So what the Moreland Commission
5 recommended to the governor is to take away the
6 requirement for the P.S.C. to have to go to court
7 because, for example, other states allow their --
8 their P.S.C.s to just give administrative penalties
9 internally, remove the knowingly bar because that
10 was tremendously high and replace it with a
11 reasonable business practice, and also change the
12 penalty from a hundred thousand dollars a day to a
13 percentage of the -- the income of that particular
14 company, as well. So the higher the -- the fine is
15 going to be, the more the company will then think
16 differently about failing to do something that they
17 would need to do to protect their rate payers. So
18 all those recommendations were put into the
19 governor's budget.

20 The other thing that -- that we
21 had recommended is to either revoke the
22 certificates that utilities presently have because
23 when a utility -- when some of the utilities were
24 created, they did it via franchise and they got a

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2 certificate to operate around the state. And those
3 who don't have certificates that were created after
4 a certain year or that were franchised after a
5 certain year, we recommended that there be fitness
6 review to review the viability of that utility to
7 continue operating. So that -- that -- the lack of
8 those two pieces are what -- what was significantly
9 missing from the P.S.C. So all those
10 recommendations were put into the governor's
11 budget.

12 Something else that we noticed,
13 by way of doing the investigation that we did, is
14 that the P.S.C. had moved away from its core
15 mission. It's supposed to be a regulatory
16 oversight agency and that's what they should be
17 focused on. And at one point, they were doing
18 audits. They were doing operational and management
19 audits. And that completely changed well over a
20 decade ago. They moved away from that and really
21 minimized their auditing power. So we took a look
22 at that. We realized that -- we made
23 recommendations to the governor, that that go back
24 to what it was to strengthen the P.S.C.'s

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2 oversight. And those recommendations were also put
3 in the governor's budget.

4 Also what we found is that, you
5 know, by naturally through attrition, but also
6 other means as well, is that the P.S.C. had a
7 substantial reduction -- I mean, the D.P.S., the
8 Department of Public Service, which is the employee
9 part that serves the Public Service Commission, has
10 substantial reduction in staff. So if you take an
11 agency that has moved away from its core mission
12 and then has lost staff, what you're dealing with
13 and what you now have is an agency that doesn't
14 have a lot of power and then doesn't have a lot of
15 staff to enforce whatever power it does have. So
16 we also made recommendations to the governor to
17 increase its staffing to a reasonable amount, and
18 those recommendations were also put in the budget
19 as well.

20 So those -- those are what our
21 recommendations were for -- for -- for Department
22 of Public Service which is the -- with -- which
23 serves the Public Service Commission. And we're
24 waiting and hoping that through the negotiations

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2 that are taking place with the legislature from now
3 to March 31st that the bill that was put in doesn't
4 change too much.

5 Another recommendation that we
6 had made was that the Moreland Commission took a
7 look at potential redundancies. And one of the --
8 in the different agencies, and noticed that there
9 is an overlap of energy efficiency programs. So we
10 also made a recommendation to the governor to unify
11 those -- the policy making for emergency -- not
12 emergency -- for energy efficiency programs as
13 well. And that's something that is an ongoing part
14 of our investigation.

15 And even though -- so in our
16 interim report, as mentioned earlier, we made
17 recommendations on LIPA but we also met rate --
18 made recommendations to strengthen the P.S.C. so
19 those -- that is now pending in legislation, but
20 our investigation is ongoing. This is the eighth
21 of eleven hearings that we're having. We're having
22 one next week in Binghamton and for information on
23 our Binghamton hearing and our other hearings that
24 are coming once a week for the next few weeks, you

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2 could go to our website.

3 We're -- we're continuing our
4 investigation by reviewing all the documents that
5 we have, by meeting with the utilities and other
6 stakeholders. Part of our process of doing our
7 investigation is -- is by issuing subpoenas like we
8 did is we -- and is also meeting with stakeholders.
9 In anticipation of tonight's hearing, what we did
10 is -- what we've been doing around the state is
11 reaching out to emergency managers and county
12 administrators in the counties that a certain
13 region -- certain hearing is covered.

14 So, for example, this particular
15 hearing in the North Country covers seven counties
16 and we reached out to all those seven counties, the
17 county administrators and the emergency managers,
18 to see if they'd be willing to come this evening
19 and to share their testimony on how the utilities
20 responded. So several of them are here this
21 evening, which we're grateful for, but we're also
22 obtaining data by going through documents and
23 having meetings and interviews outside of the
24 public hearing process, as well. So this will be

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2 ongoing and then we anticipate wrapping up our --
3 the commission anticipates wrapping up our process
4 in -- sometime in the late spring as well.

5 So what I also want to do is just
6 mention our efforts to get the notice out. What we
7 did is we -- to -- to make sure, because we
8 understand that the farther north that we go, the
9 less immediate urgency there would be for folks to
10 come testify. Like we had a lot of folks
11 testifying down in the hearings, you know, down in
12 the city on Long Island because they have Sandy
13 fresh on -- on their mind.

14 But since the Moreland Commission
15 is charged with taking a look at all the recent
16 storms going back to December 2008, it's important
17 that we go statewide. So when we have hearings in
18 places where there weren't -- wasn't a storm
19 recently, we've been really doing our best to
20 advertise our Moreland hearings. So we contacted
21 all the local press outlets up here and we've
22 contacted them about three times in the past week
23 and a half to two weeks to let them know what's
24 going on. We've also sent e-mails to all the state

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2 legislators in the area to let them know that the
3 hearing's going on and ask them to communicate to
4 their constituency groups. And as we stated
5 earlier, we also reached out to each one of the
6 county administrators.

7 So at this time, now what we'd
8 like to do is open it up to those who are here this
9 evening to testify. We usually have limits -- like
10 a time limit on folks' testimony, but since we
11 don't have a tremendous crowd tonight we will have
12 the opportunity to hear from everybody here, which
13 is what we would really prefer to do. So at this
14 point what I'd like to do is list the speakers, the
15 first few speakers. I usually list them in the
16 order of one to three, so the second and third
17 speaker will be prepared to come up here to
18 testify.

19 And I'll tell you who we have
20 this evening so far. First -- the first speaker
21 this evening will be Keith Zimmerman, followed by
22 Randy Preston, and followed by Brian LaFlure. And
23 when you come up, please acknowledge where it is,
24 which particular county or which particular agency

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2 that you're representing.

3 So we welcome Mr. Zimmerman up to
4 the podium.

5 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Good evening. On
6 behalf of the St. Lawrence County Board of
7 Legislators, I want to thank the Moreland
8 Commission and its staff for taking time to come to
9 the North Country and affording us an opportunity
10 to comment. I am Keith Zimmerman. I am the
11 director of the county planning office and I am
12 accompanied by Michael Cunningham, our director of
13 governmental services.

14 Since the ice storm of 1998, St.
15 Lawrence County has become keenly aware of how
16 devastating, widespread, and frustrating storm
17 related power outages can be, and particularly in
18 our case in the form of damage to aerial delivery
19 systems. At that time, we developed an intense
20 relationship with our local National Grid
21 representatives and have subsequently remained
22 pro-actively in communication with them as they
23 look to both harden their delivery systems and make
24 circuits more redundant.

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2 All of National Grid's recent
3 major initiatives, I believe, have been designed to
4 improve both system capacity and reliability in the
5 North Country. Within the last four to five years,
6 National Grid has completed two major transmission
7 substation projects in the North Country, the
8 first, a substation near Akwesasne to provide a
9 third source between Nicholville and Malone. It
10 has increased the systems capacity, improved its
11 voltage and allows National Grid some flexibility
12 to isolate outages in the northeast of St. Lawrence
13 and northern Franklin Counties.

14 The second big project which
15 affects this area was the Tri-Lakes project which
16 involved a new substation south of Colton and a new
17 transmission line to Piercefield, which provides a
18 secondary transmission source to the Tri-Lakes
19 region. In addition to the transmission lines, we
20 understand they also installed voltage regulation
21 facilities in Saranac and Tupper Lake. This was a
22 major regional project designed to improve their
23 system performance during critical winter load
24 periods and also allows them to have an alternate

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2 source for these communities during major system
3 outages.

4 In addition to these projects,
5 National Grid has undertaken several system-wide
6 activities that we're aware of. Obviously, the
7 most in -- obviously one to most people is they've
8 continued to intensively trim trees around their
9 overhead distribution circuits. We understand
10 they've installed distribution reclosures in the --
11 several in the northern region to help reduce the
12 number of customers impacted by extended power
13 outages. And they've also constructed and improved
14 ties between distribution circuits, allowing
15 switch -- switching capabilities between
16 substations and reducing customer impacts due to
17 substation or distribution outages. We've enjoyed
18 in our buildings have to go off grid several times
19 while they were making those changes, and we're
20 grateful for them for doing it.

21 Overall, I think we've seen an
22 improvement in system reliability and I think our
23 distribution utility company, National Grid, has
24 made appropriate investments designed to give it

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2 both more reliable service and greater flexibility
3 and service delivery in the event of a catastrophic
4 outage. We encourage you folks, as you've already
5 identified, to evaluate these and other initiatives
6 to determine whether this is an adequate commitment
7 being made to sustaining and or improving our
8 delivery systems at both an appropriate pace or
9 level and to encourage the Public Service
10 Commission to consider the same in its
11 deliberations.

12 That having been said, we remain
13 a large principally rural service area and the last
14 mile challenges as we experienced during the ice
15 storm remain and essentially the same levels of
16 service vulnerability remain given our broad
17 dependence on overhead lines.

18 Lastly, while you were focusing,
19 rightly so, on power delivery systems, it is not
20 the only utility capable of being disrupted by
21 major utilities, major storm events. The North
22 Country is also particularly vulnerable to
23 disruption in telecommunication systems,
24 particularly in areas not well served by wireless.

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2 The North Country Regional Economic Development
3 Council, which Tony chairs for us, clearly
4 recognized this and made it a regional priority
5 through advance or proposal from the Development
6 Authority of the North Country to capitalize on its
7 fiber optic network to connect high speed broadband
8 to twenty-one public emergency locations across six
9 counties, Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Lewis, Franklin,
10 Essex, and Clinton.

11 The network will interconnect
12 nine one one centers public emergency locations in
13 critical emergency communications towers. In
14 addition to this, twenty municipalities across the
15 same six counties will also be provided with
16 broadband service. The state found the project
17 worthy of a two point two million dollar
18 investment.

19 We hope as a follow-up, the
20 Moreland or some other commission will review in
21 particular other aerial utilities that could be
22 vulnerable to major weather or storm related
23 events. And thank you for your time and
24 consideration.

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2 MS. CALCATERRA: Mr. Zimmerman,
3 we actually have some questions for you if you
4 don't mind.

5 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Sure.

6 MS. CALCATERRA: I first want to
7 defer to see if any of the fellow commissioners
8 have any.

9 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Please.

10 MS. CALCATERRA: Okay. What we
11 found when we were in -- taking a look at the
12 utilities downstate is that different utilities
13 have various definitions of what they deem to be
14 their V.I.P. clients or critical infrastructure
15 clients during a storm. Have you ever worked with
16 National Grid to develop what -- what you deem to
17 be a critical infrastructure clientele during the
18 storm? I mean, for them to immediately -- to
19 address right after the storm?

20 MR. ZIMMERMAN: In the ice storm
21 in 1998, it was a relatively simple thing to
22 prioritize. Our emergency operation center got up
23 and running. The National Grid people were there
24 right away, and we made it our highest priority to

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2 restore power in particular to life saving
3 institutions, critical care units, public utilities
4 in terms of water and particular supply areas and
5 so on.

6 After that, you know, National
7 Grid's priorities were around their major
8 distribution requirements. And to the extent that
9 we knew there were going to be long term outages,
10 we made it a priority to get generating capacity to
11 those affected facilities in that kind of priority
12 basis.

13 MS. CALCATERRA: Generating
14 capacity by providing them generators?

15 MR. ZIMMERMAN: In the
16 short-term, sure.

17 MS. CALCATERRA: Okay. Have
18 you -- what we found is that after Sandy, a few
19 things happened. One was that, I mean, obviously
20 getting fuel was a challenge because a lot of the
21 fuel terminals were not functional because either
22 they couldn't get fuel delivered or electricity
23 wasn't being provided to them. Also the gas
24 stations didn't have electricity. So the fuel

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2 terminals were one piece which left people stranded
3 in their homes because they couldn't drive their
4 car because they were afraid to use the fuel in
5 their car.

6 But they were also ham-stringed
7 when they didn't have communication because all the
8 cell towers were down and they -- they were not
9 able to make phone calls. So we were looking at
10 deeming cell towers as critical infrastructure and
11 also certain fuel terminals as critical
12 infrastructure, as well. Do you have that -- so if
13 we were to make a recommendation as the Moreland
14 Commission what do you have in St. Lawrence County
15 that's similar to that, expanding beyond healthcare
16 facilities --

17 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Well, I'm having
18 a flashback now.

19 MS. CALCATERRA: -- that you
20 deemed --? Okay.

21 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Because one of
22 our priorities --.

23 MS. CALCATERRA: I didn't mean to
24 cause that.

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2 MR. ZIMMERMAN: No, that's all
3 right. It's just it's been a while. One of our
4 priorities early on -- of course, I encourage you
5 to try to use your cell phones as you're driving
6 home. We've been a bit of an oasis for cellular
7 communication for a long time, and we have large
8 areas not well served.

9 Back in 1998, even more so. One
10 of our priorities back then was to make sure that
11 we got power out to our radio communication towers
12 and also to get fuel out there for the generators.
13 The county was fortunate to have a large fuel depot
14 at its disposal. As I recall, and we're probably
15 not too proud to admit this, I believe we actually
16 commandeered a fuel truck that was stranded up
17 here.

18 MS. CALCATERRA: It was a
19 friendly commandeer. I'm sure it was.

20 MR. ZIMMERMAN: It was a friendly
21 commandeer and they were well paid, right.

22 MS. CALCATERRA: For the record.

23 MR. ZIMMERMAN: But, you know,
24 that was clearly a priority as well, and -- and

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2 power, in particular, getting out to those places
3 where we deployed generators was somebody's, you
4 know, personal charge every day in the -- in the
5 emergency operating center to make sure those
6 facilities were kept up and running and fueled.

7 We could certainly work with the
8 Moreland Commission and certainly could work with
9 our -- our folks from National Grid are here, but
10 I'm sure that we could sit down and put together,
11 you know, a map that would detail where those
12 locations would be. Certainly the -- the ability
13 to have radio communication was really important
14 for us to be able to communicate to the public at
15 large.

16 Amazingly, most of the phone land
17 lines did not go down, which was shocking, so we
18 had pretty good telecommunications ironically even
19 though we didn't have power for a couple of weeks.
20 But that was by sheer luck, I think, more than
21 anything else. A few critical lines were kept up.

22 MS. CALCATERRA: Do you -- does
23 your county work with National Grid on their
24 emergency plan?

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2 MR. ZIMMERMAN: I'd -- I'd have
3 to ask you to ask the National Grid folks because
4 this is not my normal area of expertise.

5 MS. CALCATERRA: Understood. Do
6 you know if your county has ever participated in --
7 in drills with their emergency management plan?

8 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Again, our
9 emergency services director couldn't be here --

10 MS. CALCATERRA: Okay.

11 MR. ZIMMERMAN: -- but I'm sure
12 National Grid could tell you if that's the case.

13 MS. CALCATERRA: Thanks. Do
14 you -- how -- how does your county or how does
15 National Grid -- your experience -- and this is not
16 National Grid. What we -- this -- this is not one
17 utility.

18 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Sure.

19 MS. CALCATERRA: What we're
20 finding across the state is that there is such a
21 competition for mutual aid when -- when there's
22 a -- when there's a weather emergency that the
23 utilities compete for mutual aid from county --
24 from states that are nearby and then states that

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2 are farther away. Have you had an experience good
3 or bad?

4 Because what we're trying to do,
5 this is not about us -- us getting negative
6 commentary on the utilities. This is about us
7 learning best -- best practices because some
8 utilities may do something that will -- could serve
9 as a best practice that we could recommend to other
10 utilities. Have you had any experience working
11 with National Grid on managing mutual aid that
12 comes from out of state and providing that mutual
13 aid housing and other services?

14 MR. ZIMMERMAN: I can tell you
15 that during the ice storm, we had multiple meetings
16 during the day with all of the coordinators,
17 including National Grid. They kept us well
18 apprised of the resources that were being deployed
19 both internally by themselves and bringing in
20 resources from other areas. And as those resources
21 and -- became available, one of our charges was to
22 help them find locations.

23 So as I recall, we converted the
24 gymnasium at St. Lawrence University into a

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2 bunkhouse and so on. So one of the challenges, of
3 course, during the long-term power outage was to
4 find housing for all these employees and -- and
5 workers that were coming to the region to restore
6 power. And they were very good about keeping us
7 apprised about the numbers that we would need to be
8 addressing.

9 MS. CALCATERRA: Were those
10 conversations had before the storm or were they --
11 were they during and after the storm?

12 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Well, it --
13 these -- I can't speak to before the storm, but
14 they certainly occurred on a regular basis during
15 the event.

16 MS. CALCATERRA: And after the
17 storm. And next, I'll go to Commissioner Collins.

18 DR. COLLINS: Go ahead.

19 MS. CALCATERRA: No, go ahead.

20 DR. COLLINS: I -- I just wanted
21 to follow up a little bit on the idea of -- of the
22 mutual aid and other teams coming in from other
23 states from across the country. One of the things
24 that occurred in -- on -- with Sandy is that -- by

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2 the way, I guess we're demonstrating the sparseness
3 of population when we'll turn up on another
4 government assignment tomorrow --

5 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Tomorrow
6 afternoon, yeah.

7 DR. COLLINS: -- in a different
8 venue. The -- particularly on Long Island, Staten
9 Island, they -- they had so many teams come in
10 because the devastation so if you want to follow
11 with me here for a second, the greater the
12 devastation, the more the need for mutual aid teams
13 to come in and the more need for accommodation.

14 And yet, when you think about it
15 the greater the devastation, of course, what's
16 happening is that you're getting less and less
17 accommodation the greater the devastation because
18 it's just being wiped out along with everything
19 else. And so they kind of -- on Long Island, they
20 went over the precipice. It seemed like they ran
21 out of -- of accommodation and they had too many
22 teams and they couldn't assign them.

23 Do you think that if -- if people
24 up in the North Country had given thought to that

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2 occurrence, I mean, St. Lawrence and ourselves, we
3 all -- we all housed National Grid people and --
4 and it worked well. But do we run the risk of --
5 do we have the ultimate plan for a really
6 devastating storm, and we've got, you know, no
7 accommodation left and -- and very little
8 infrastructure? So if you get to that point, do --
9 do you feel comfortable that -- that we -- we would
10 make it?

11 MR. ZIMMERMAN: I -- I think
12 that, you know, Dr. Collins, you know better than I
13 or can appreciate as well as I do, we're a pretty
14 resilient people up here. When people didn't have
15 anything to burn, they just went out to their front
16 yard and broke up the tree branch that fell and put
17 it in the fireplace.

18 I'm -- I'm fairly comfortable
19 that, you know, we could accommodate and scale up
20 to a major event. I think that the big challenges
21 for us and the fear at the time was how to deal
22 with potable water, making sure that our critical
23 care facilities were powered up appropriately.
24 There were times that we were using overly large

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2 generators on hospitals because they had a need and
3 those generators were available, they could be
4 better deployed elsewhere. I think matching the
5 equipment to need was a bit of an issue up front.

6 One of the other things that
7 happened that we just didn't contemplate at the
8 time, the Governor Pataki at the time, very
9 generously, sent a train up loaded with supplies.
10 Unfortunately, none of the rail crossings were
11 working and the state police were leap-frogging up
12 the roads, blocking off the rail intersections to
13 make sure that nobody who was accidentally out on
14 the road could be hit by the train.

15 I -- you know, it's that kind of
16 thing that nobody really anticipates until it
17 happens that present kind of unique challenges.
18 But, you know, we're fortunate, Dr. Collins, in
19 that we have large institutions available to us
20 that have been good partners in these type of
21 events. They've got tremendous capacity. They've
22 got food. They can accommodate a lot of people
23 in -- in an emergency situation. The schools were
24 all part of our emergency network.

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2 We could open up shelters in all
3 of -- almost all of our schools now and bring
4 backup power to them. You know, we've gotten more
5 savvy about the types of backup power that we keep
6 on hand. I -- I think in the future we learned a
7 lot of lessons in 1998. I think we'd be better
8 prepared. That having been said, there's nothing
9 like a catastrophe for you to find out, so.

10 DR. COLLINS: Yeah. I -- I will
11 say my -- my observation that maybe shared with the
12 other commissioner is that the -- the further we
13 ventured into rural areas, the understanding of the
14 magnitude of the problems faced by the utilities
15 and the expectation of restoration has become -- in
16 general, the public are more understanding the
17 further -- as we've progressed into more rural
18 areas. The -- the -- in urban areas, there is a
19 high expectation of almost immediate restoration,
20 and -- and I do think that's something that is
21 valuable up here.

22 MR. ZIMMERMAN: I -- I do recall
23 and -- and -- and I'm sure you will as well that at
24 the -- the time, there were roads that we basically

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2 had to go and chisel out of ice just to get the
3 NiMo crews back into some rough terrain to restore
4 some of those last mile connections. The rural
5 landscape is challenging and the infrastructure is
6 stretched, and everything we do -- almost
7 everything we do up here is aerial. So we're very
8 vulnerable to aerial outages.

9 And -- and, again, not just
10 electricity. I -- I think that ultimately we could
11 be more vulnerable in telecommunications in the
12 long run. Thank you, again.

13 MS. CALCATERRA: I -- I -- I'm so
14 sorry. Two more quick questions. One of them is
15 on communications. How is that the constituents of
16 St. Lawrence perceive communications from National
17 Grid after a storm? How are they communicated
18 with? How do you sense they're communicated with
19 being an administrator?

20 MR. ZIMMERMAN: The --.

21 MS. CALCATERRA: And what the
22 expectation is as far as what the global E.T.R.s
23 are and local E.T.R.s and how they're communicated?

24 MR. ZIMMERMAN: I -- I think

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2 they -- in -- in our area, they do an outstanding
3 job. They are the utility. There's no question.
4 And they're very good about getting information up
5 and broadcast. Obviously, they put things on their
6 website if that's available to people, but they use
7 the radio communications and television
8 communications very well.

9 When they -- they give estimates,
10 they've been pretty reliable. And they've always
11 been very, very good about keeping us informed at
12 the emergency operation center of any outage for
13 any duration for almost any reason. There's a lot
14 of things that happen that aren't storm related and
15 we still get informed by National Grid whenever
16 there's an outage that requires them to roll a
17 response. They at least keep us apprised so if we
18 get calls from people who are concerned or
19 confused, at our nine one one center we know what's
20 going on. They're very good about that.

21 MS. CALCATERRA: And think
22 it's -- the constituency of St. Lawrence County has
23 its same sentiment?

24 MR. ZIMMERMAN: I -- I think by

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2 and large. I -- I think that -- that they've been
3 very good about being very proactive about the
4 things that they've done to try to harden their
5 system. They've advertised that well. They've let
6 us know. They've let the public know. There have
7 been, on occasion, needs to take down parts of the
8 grid to -- to make it better and that is
9 disruptive, and they've been very good about
10 working with us on appropriate hours to do that.

11 And for the folks -- the
12 households that are affected, they let them know
13 well in advance and I think by and large people are
14 pretty satisfied.

15 MS. CALCATERRA: I -- I just have
16 one more question. The -- after the storm, what we
17 found is that there's challenges and this is not
18 related to a utility or particular county, but this
19 is just something that seems to be statewide is --
20 is dealing with the downed wires. How do you --
21 and I understand you don't -- you're not in the
22 emergency management center, but how is downed
23 wires communicated and managed with the county and
24 National Grid?

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2 Because what we found in several
3 of the southern counties that there would be downed
4 wires that a utility will come and determine that
5 wire to be either hot or cold and what is missing
6 is a communication with the town to let them know
7 so that the town could come in and remove those
8 trees right away so -- so folks can go up and down
9 a road or those wires can be replaced as well.

10 And that always seems to be a
11 disconnect and it's not, like I said, reflective of
12 the utility. I want to see if there's any type of
13 model here that's used or is this something that
14 also needs to be addressed?

15 MR. ZIMMERMAN: I'd -- I'd really
16 defer, again, not being an emergency services
17 person, to, you know, National Grid in terms of how
18 they communicate that to us. I can tell you that
19 we're deeply suspicious of electricity as a people
20 up here, so the basic rule of thumb is if there's a
21 wire on the ground, assume it's hot and stay away
22 from it.

23 And then the ice storm happened
24 in 1999 (sic), they were repeated in continuous

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2 broadcast warnings to folks to stay away from
3 downed lines and allow the National Grid and other
4 crews to come in and address them. And I -- again,
5 I defer to National Grid as to how they communicate
6 that with us but, you know, clearly that was all
7 part of the communication where they knew they had
8 downed power lines.

9 If they needed help in getting
10 trees removed, we had crews and capability to do
11 that. The campuses did a lot of their own tree
12 removal and so on. And that was all coordinated in
13 the emergency operation centers with the National
14 Grid folks.

15 MS. CALCATERRA: Mr. Zimmerman,
16 who from your county should we speak with from the
17 emergency management side to get more granular on
18 those issues?

19 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Well, we -- we
20 have a relatively new emergency services director,
21 so he wasn't here in 1999. But we can have him
22 reach back to you in general. And as a matter of
23 fact, we're -- we're two emergency services
24 directors removed from that event. But, again,

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2 I -- I think the National Grid folks who are up
3 here, Rich is here and -- and other folks could
4 speak to the type of coordination we have. Even in
5 an anticipatory storm event a few years ago when we
6 activated the E.O.C. they were right there.

7 MS. CALCATERRA: Understood.

8 MR. ZIMMERMAN: So they've been
9 very good about that. We're -- we're, you know, I
10 guess one of the benefits of being a small rural
11 area, large in geography, small in population, is
12 that we can ask them to come to the E.O.C. if we
13 stand it up and they'll be there. Because to a
14 certain extent, you know, we've got to wait and see
15 what happens and -- and they're not serving a
16 million people. They're serving a hundred
17 thousand. And so we -- we tend to have good
18 communications with those folks.

19 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you.

20 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Okay. Now --.

21 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you so
22 much for your testimony this evening. I promise I
23 have no more questions.

24 Our next speaker is Randy

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2 Preston.

3 MR. PRESTON: Good evening. I'm
4 Randy Preston. I'm the town supervisor in the Town
5 of Wilmington, which is a town that's about twelve
6 miles east of here. We have about twelve hundred
7 people and I'm also the chairman of the Public
8 Safety Committee for Essex County.

9 And I'm sad to report that I did
10 have an incident in my town three weeks ago. It
11 was on January 31st and we had a -- basically it
12 wasn't forecasted, a -- a high wind event. The
13 temperature was approximately in the, you know,
14 twenty-two, twenty-four degrees in the morning, and
15 we had winds in excess of fifty miles an hour,
16 sustained really for most of the day.

17 We had a lot of serious damage
18 take place in Wilmington. And most of our town --
19 the fire department was out basically steady from
20 nine a.m. on. And then probably somewhere ten --
21 eleven o'clock just about ninety-eight percent of
22 the town lost its power. At three o'clock, I
23 reached out to our utility, NYSEG, to try to find
24 out what we were up against.

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2 The forecast for the evening was
3 to be in the low teens. After several attempts, I
4 did get through to my contact there and I'm very
5 sad to report that I got a canned response that
6 anyone on the street would get as to where we
7 stood. And it was that we're in the make safe
8 mode. When the make safe mode is completed, then
9 we will start with restoration.

10 And I tried to get out of her
11 where do we stand for tonight. And all she could
12 repeat to me over and over was you have seven
13 hundred and forty six homes out, you're not going
14 to get power back until noon tomorrow. And I tried
15 to further get out of her do we have some areas
16 that are going to come back up? Do we have say,
17 for instance, Hazelton Road? We know we have poles
18 down. We know that's not coming up. Can -- and
19 all I got repeatedly was the canned response.

20 Based on that, I declared a state
21 of emergency. The fire department had been out all
22 day and we were setting up shelters. We were
23 securing food from the two stores that we do have
24 in Wilmington to prepare. I went through the ice

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2 storm. I was a deputy fire coordinator then. I've
3 been in the fire service thirty-five years, so I've
4 been through this before and I also know enough
5 that up in here in the North Country we plan to
6 fend for ourselves for at least three days.

7 But having said that, the
8 frustration of not being able to get clear and
9 concise answers any different than anyone that's on
10 the street, in theory, being the town supervisor
11 declaring a state of emergency, I'm the person in
12 charge. And I couldn't get nothing but a canned
13 response. And this is probably going to sound a
14 little bit strange, but within thirty minutes of
15 all this going into effect, I started getting phone
16 calls from people that the power was coming back
17 on.

18 So needless to say, it was a very
19 frustrating event for me. We ended up at the end
20 of the -- we had a hundred and seventy-five homes
21 without power overnight, but I could not get clear
22 answers, no how -- no matter how hard I tried, out
23 of our utility as to can somebody give me a
24 realistic estimate as to what we're up against. We

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2 ended up utilizing the volunteer fire department.
3 We did it door to door, and that is how we found
4 out what was going on. It was very frustrating for
5 me. I expressed the frustration in it.

6 The next morning at nine o'clock
7 I heard from a NYSEG official. That was the only
8 time that I heard from NYSEG myself without me
9 trying to -- to get a hold of them. And I
10 expressed my serious frustration. I -- I forgot to
11 add earlier that that evening I was told repeatedly
12 to refer to the website. Tried for three hours,
13 couldn't get on the website.

14 The next day at about
15 eleven-thirty I was out and run into a few people
16 that were still without power. At one o'clock, I
17 reached back out to NYSEG again and asked where do
18 we stand. At this point do we still have people
19 out? I was told, no, everybody is up and running.
20 And I said, well, it just so happens I'm on your
21 website. Your website says there's twenty-nine
22 homes still without power. So I left it at that.

23 I would back up to say that a
24 year ago during Irene, Wilmington did not get hit

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2 like the towns of Jay and Keene. We did lose
3 power. They had daily updates, but the person that
4 was designated to handle those -- those conference
5 calls had no idea of the area whatsoever, and the
6 information he had was a canned response.

7 So I guess what I would say to
8 this Commission is there needs to be a process. As
9 everybody's well aware, we are having natural
10 disasters more and more frequently. There has to
11 be a process to get these utility companies to come
12 in, to deal with us, to communicate with us. I'm
13 not looking to hold somebody to something, but it's
14 a much different response trying to plan for seven
15 hundred and fifty homes without power when it's
16 eleven degrees, than it is a hundred and seventy
17 five.

18 And the frustration is -- is you
19 just can't get straight answers from anyone. I
20 mean, a suggestion I would have was something like
21 this occurs, I really think -- now, again, I will
22 echo what you've probably heard downstate that the
23 boots on the ground people are outstanding --
24 absolutely outstanding and will do anything for

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2 you. It seems when it goes up the -- the tree is
3 when things start to go bad. And I don't know why
4 they're trained to give somebody trying to plan for
5 an emergency a canned response, but that's all you
6 get.

7 So during Irene, when we were
8 having these daily updates, so to speak, the second
9 day I stopped calling in because the guy didn't
10 know the area at all and the information he had
11 wasn't accurate, wasn't up to date. Again, you
12 could find out more from riding around and seeing,
13 witnessing with your own eyes. And -- and I just
14 don't see why that could be.

15 It -- it would seem to me as if
16 that during one of these events, there's always --
17 well, we would hope there are supervisors in the
18 area. I would also point out that from what I can
19 find out, NYSEG has cut and cut and cut positions
20 to where there's single people in line trucks that
21 we never used to see ever.

22 So at a time in our life when the
23 natural disasters are coming more and more
24 frequently, we have less and less people to

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2 respond. And maybe this is the case, but I don't
3 understand why a supervisor, every couple hours,
4 couldn't call in from the field and give this
5 contact person up-to-date information.

6 I'd further like to see at least
7 twice a year that each county, whoever the utility
8 companies might be, would -- we'd set down and have
9 an open discussion and open line of communication
10 and -- and plan for what are we -- who do I call.
11 I have no number -- after-hours number other than
12 the standard number that everybody else on the
13 street does for after-hours for NYSEG.

14 And I don't want to leave -- I'm
15 also sad to report that our telephone carrier is
16 Frontier Communications, and even though for the
17 most part the phone service stayed up, that is
18 another frustrating -- that you call somebody and
19 you get somebody in Minnesota and you can tell them
20 you're the town supervisor. So? There -- there
21 doesn't seem to be any sense of urgency.

22 During Irene, we had one
23 secondary road that wasn't critical, that a week
24 and a half we had a low hanging telephone line.

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2 And the local people would respond -- oh, that's
3 not us, that's our construction crew. And we -- I
4 don't know how many phone calls we made before
5 someone from -- we actually, to be very honest, we
6 said if you don't come take care of it we're going
7 to -- we're just going to cut it and throw it in
8 the ground, you know.

9 And finally after that, they sent
10 a -- a truck out and they took care of it. I do
11 not, as town supervisor, have a twenty-four-hour
12 contact for -- for Frontier Communications which,
13 again, in this day in age, I don't know how we can
14 run disasters with -- with no communication going
15 on between the utility companies and the towns.

16 DR. COLLINS: Just a quick
17 question. The person at NYSEG that you are talking
18 to you, do -- were they in the geographic area or
19 not; do you know?

20 MR. PRESTON: Yes, they were.

21 DR. COLLINS: They were?

22 MR. PRESTON: They were.

23 MS. CALCATERRA: Do the other
24 town supervisors that are next to your town, have

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2 they had similar experiences?

3 MR. PRESTON: I would have to let
4 them speak for themselves, and it's untimely,
5 sadly, the commission's meeting tonight. We just
6 finished up this morning with the association of
7 towns in New York City and I've only been back
8 about an hour and a half myself. So a lot of the
9 supervisors were traveling today, and that's why
10 they couldn't be here.

11 I'm sure that if you reached out
12 to the supervisors, they could maybe explain some
13 similar -- similar things sadly. I know that, like
14 I said, during the ice storm, afterwards and the
15 restoration process, the communication, again, was
16 horrible. That was fifteen years ago and it's just
17 as bad, if not worse, now.

18 And when I was at the association
19 of counties a couple weeks ago in Albany, I talked
20 with other counterparts downstate and they echoed
21 the same exact thing. With the boots-on-the-ground
22 people were outstanding, no communication with the
23 same utility company.

24 MS. CALCATERRA: We -- we've

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2 heard similar complaints that the -- the
3 municipal -- they're called municipal calls is the
4 term that's used downstate. That municipal calls
5 that are set up daily or sometimes twice daily are
6 set up with the public relations person of the
7 utility and everyone will get a call-in number and
8 you'll be put on mute and the P.R. person will then
9 go through the litany of what they're going to do.

10 And what happens is that elected
11 officials will stay on the phone because they want
12 to wait until the end of the conversation to say
13 what is going on in their community or ask a
14 question, but emergency managers get off and get
15 frustrated because in order for them to get the
16 real granular information that they need, they've
17 got to wait for this long phone call as well.

18 So what -- even though you
19 play -- you play two roles in your capacity as
20 supervisor and -- and as dealing with emergency
21 management in the fire department is that one thing
22 we found is that there needs to be a bifurcated
23 system. Like if you want to continue having these
24 conversations with elected officials you can do

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2 that, but the emergency managers need to be treated
3 differently, because you have your staff on the
4 ground. The -- the fire department and you were
5 going door to door. You need to know what it is
6 you're going to communicate back and forth.

7 So this is just -- it -- it's a
8 trend, and I think we're all learning from this and
9 the utilities are going to be learning from this as
10 well that you need to break them out. You can't
11 treat emergency managers as you would treat elected
12 officials in -- in that capacity.

13 The -- the second thing is the
14 website challenge is that people will go on
15 websites and what they'll find on there is global
16 E.T.R. So they'll find out one general restoration
17 time for an entire community when the reality is
18 that you don't know if it was a substation or it's
19 a line that -- or pole that is down. So there may
20 be a different E.T.R. for one side of the street
21 because their poles aren't down and it could just
22 be a transformer and the other side could be a
23 whole substation that's down.

24 So the other issue that we're

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2 finding is that there needs to be global E.T.R.s
3 and localized E.T.R.s and that needs to be
4 communicated clearly that there's a difference.
5 Otherwise, people will see an E.T.R. on the website
6 and think it applies to them. So part of this is
7 just managing people's expectations as well.

8 So what you're -- what you're
9 saying and by way of the conversations that you had
10 with folks downstate and at the -- at the event
11 that was just in New York City is somewhat similar.
12 And this is some of the things --

13 MR. PRESTON: Correct.

14 MS. CALCATERRA: -- that we
15 are -- we are looking at as well. The -- the -- is
16 there any communicate -- we just want to shut the
17 door because we have folks singing downstairs.

18 How -- how has it worked with
19 your town and NYSEG with downed wires and downed
20 trees? Because as I had mentioned earlier, trees
21 fall on top of wires and the one consistent
22 challenge that we find across the board is that the
23 utilities aren't clearly working with the townships
24 who actually send out the crew, that when a utility

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2 says a wire is cold then that -- then the local
3 town can remove the tree and then open up the
4 roadway. Have you -- what has your experience been
5 in that?

6 MR. PRESTON: Sadly, absolutely
7 no communication whatsoever. None. Zero.

8 MS. CALCATERRA: And by way of
9 what you said, it's -- it was inferred that there
10 is -- there hasn't been a sharing of an emergency
11 management plan with you or drills on the emergency
12 management plan?

13 MR. PRESTON: I've -- I've never
14 heard from NYSEG and I've been the town supervisor
15 for six years and I got the contact phone number
16 from one of the neighboring towns. I wasn't even
17 sure when I came on board who the contact. And
18 even though it's been three weeks since the event
19 happened in Wilmington and I expressed my
20 displeasure with how things were handled, I haven't
21 heard from anyone about better communication, which
22 I would think I would have heard soon.

23 MR. LAWSKY: I think you're going
24 to now.

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2 MS. CALCATERRA: Yes.

3 MR. PRESTON: That would be a
4 good thing.

5 MS. CALCATERRA: Absolutely. So
6 there wasn't any after-the-storm review which
7 usually happens within a few weeks after a storm?

8 MR. PRESTON: Not as of yet. It
9 will be three weeks tomorrow and I read in the
10 newspaper the other day that they had reached out
11 to me, but they must have called the wrong number
12 because I have heard from no one.

13 MS. CALCATERRA: Okay. One --
14 one more question as well, but it has to do with
15 critical infrastructure. And it's not -- it's a
16 question, actually. It may be a suggestion is
17 that, again, what we're finding is that it -- that
18 critical infrastructure is defined differently
19 between what a utility defines critical
20 infrastructure and what the rate-payer would define
21 critical infrastructure as the people who are
22 actually using it. How did NYSEG work with the
23 critical infrastructure in your community?

24 MR. PRESTON: Again, there was

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2 really no communication at all. And for us, it
3 would be no different than everyone else. We'd
4 want to get the -- the fire station, I mean, some
5 of those places back up and going first. There's
6 people with special needs we'd want to get back up.
7 But to be very honest, their biggest user in the
8 Town of Wilmington in the area is Whiteface
9 Mountain Ski Center and everyone tells us be
10 thankful Whiteface is there because that's why you
11 get your power back so quick.

12 MS. CALCATERRA: Understood.

13 Thank you so much for your time.

14 MR. PRESTON: Thank you.

15 MS. CALCATERRA: Yes. Really
16 thank you so much for coming and testifying this
17 evening.

18 Our next speaker this evening is
19 Brian LaFlure and I do apologize for the
20 pronunciation.

21 MR. LAFLURE: That's all right.

22 MS. CALCATERRA: And I'm used to
23 it with Calcaterra, so.

24 MR. LAFLURE: Brian LaFlure, I'm

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2 the emergency manager, director and fire
3 coordinator for Warren County which encompasses the
4 Lake George area and areas that you might recognize
5 if I throw that name out. Ready?

6 MS. CALCATERRA: Yes.

7 Absolutely.

8 MR. LAFLURE: Okay. In my
9 experience with the utilities that we deal with in
10 our area, our area, good or bad, is very, very
11 prone to thunderstorms and extreme high winds for a
12 period of maybe twenty minutes; yet, it creates a
13 large amount of devastation. And therefore, we
14 have to deal with the trees down.

15 One thing that people don't think
16 about is the right-of-way that they can clear
17 around their wires is fifty feet. All along that
18 right-of-way are seventy-five and hundred foot
19 trees, so it's not hard to figure out that that
20 isn't always going to be the way to fix the
21 problem. The trees are higher than -- they'll
22 reach to the -- to the lines; they're going to come
23 down.

24 As with most of my counterparts

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2 here, the people in our area our resilient. They
3 assume power outages will happen. They will deal
4 with them for a period of time, two to three days
5 maybe. We start getting calls about twenty-four
6 hours. But they understand and they know what's
7 going on. So we see, I think, less of the push
8 back from our residents then you might see in other
9 places.

10 Right now, we're covered all by
11 National Grid. We used to be Niagara Mohawk. I
12 will tell you right up front National Grid is a
13 substantial improvement over Niagara Mohawk. I
14 know a lot of people at Niagara Mohawk. I know
15 their operation. Switching to National Grid, it
16 may have been hard on the employees, they've done
17 some things -- done some things with the unions,
18 but they have made a much better operation as far
19 as response goes.

20 We have a -- basically each
21 county manager in my area anyhow, I have a National
22 Grid representative that I know personally and he's
23 my contact. If he isn't there, I know who the
24 number two is. I have their cell phones, I have

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2 their home phones, and anytime something's
3 happened, generally even before I may know about
4 it, they'll be on the phone to me telling me, hey,
5 by the way, this went down. We're going to have to
6 shut down this circuit. You're going to lose
7 twenty-seven hundred customers in this section of
8 the county. And I appreciate that. That's real
9 important.

10 The website for us, the National
11 Grid website not only shows you how many but it
12 shows you on a map exactly there's three hundred
13 people out in this town, there's five people out in
14 this town. When we look at that and we keep it up
15 on a monitor, you'll see that -- that stays there
16 all the time. You walk by it; you can see exactly
17 what's going on. That tells me where I should be
18 sending maybe some of my resources. If somebody
19 tells, oh, my god, the power's out, and I look on
20 the map and, yeah, it's out but there's only like
21 twenty-five people on that road, yet I have a whole
22 section of a town that is out that has some
23 critical infrastructure, where am I going to aim my
24 resources? And that's -- that works for us. I

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2 think that's important.

3 So as far as that goes, I have to
4 say good things about National Grid. Like I say,
5 it wasn't always that way. I was surprised during
6 Sandy. We all stood up for Sandy. You know, it's
7 coming. We're going to get our butts kicked again,
8 and everybody was ready. It turned out to be an
9 excellent drill for us, but we had everything in
10 place.

11 I left my office right about the
12 time Sandy was hitting New York. I'm already
13 seeing the parking lot at the K-Mart, which is one
14 of their central locations, I'm seeing thirty
15 trucks from out of town. Not National Grid trucks,
16 but trucks from Massachusetts or wherever. And
17 then looking at their storm board, days before this
18 came, they were pre-positioning those assets. For
19 me, that is huge.

20 I know how they are. Fewer
21 people. As Randy mentioned one guy in a truck.
22 You know, one guy in a truck is not going to go out
23 and put up a whole bunch of lines and put in poles.
24 They need the extra help. I do say that from my

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2 standpoint, I think they mobilized a lot of people
3 very quickly. Now I know obviously at some point,
4 they sent everybody down to Long Island, but for
5 what we had, we were prepared. They were ready for
6 us and it worked pretty well.

7 The critical infrastructure side
8 of it I'm strongly involved in communications and
9 that state's inter-operable communication system.
10 And at a meeting this morning with Commissioner
11 Hauer, we're talking about these hardened or not
12 hardened facilities. And that's one of the big
13 things.

14 They lost the wireless down on
15 the Island and really the only communication that
16 stayed up was the public safety communications.
17 Most of it. I think that all the utilities and
18 everyone needs to look very strongly at how they're
19 going to harden these scenarios. All of my tower
20 sites in my county have their own generator.
21 Belongs to me. It has a U.P.S. on it. A huge
22 U.P.S. that keeps it going until the generator
23 starts.

24 So in my area and in most of the

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2 counties around here, we've already hardened our
3 communications infrastructure. The downside is we
4 have no control over the cell sites and all the
5 other pieces of equipment. We know -- in my
6 neighborhood, I know that if the power's out for
7 more than four hours the note for Time Warner
8 that's out on the pole that is providing me my
9 Internet service and my telephone, I know in four
10 hours those batteries were dead. You just -- you
11 know it. I'm not sure how we fix that.

12 Our concern is right now more and
13 more people are going to voice over I.P. They are
14 switching their phone service from Verizon, a
15 standard landline phone, and getting it through a
16 different carrier. Getting it through over their
17 cable T.V. wire. The problem with that is when
18 there's huge problems, the phone lines don't go
19 down. Generally, the central office has a huge
20 power system. But if you're out more than four
21 hours and the pole down the street, which is where
22 you're getting your telephone from, doesn't work,
23 we lose it.

24 Alarm systems don't work.

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2 Medical alerts that senior citizens have don't
3 work. So that part of the power scenario has
4 become much more prevalent and much more important
5 than it used to be. It used to be, okay, we lost
6 our lights, don't open the refrigerator, keep it
7 closed, all those kinds of things. But now the
8 technology, the way it is, people have come to a
9 point where they rely incredibly high priority on
10 all their stuff, all their communications is done
11 with the wireless networks.

12 And that's one thing I personally
13 would like to see. It has nothing to do with
14 National Grid. But when you're looking at
15 hardening the facilities and making sure that the
16 people don't have the situation they had down on --
17 down in Sandy where there was nothing. They didn't
18 have a home. They didn't have a place. There
19 phone didn't work because the house wasn't there
20 anymore. And all they had was their cell phone.
21 Well, that didn't work either. Neither did Wi-Fi
22 or, you know, the air cards, all that stuff. So
23 hardening those facilities, especially with
24 electricity, I think is very important.

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2 The other one you mentioned, gas
3 stations, that's one that's always bothered me.
4 There's no reason why a gas station, the same as a
5 hospital or a fire house or anything else, could
6 not have the capability, at least, of plugging in a
7 generator and knowing where they're going to get it
8 when they need it. They can at least deal with the
9 volunteer firemen who need gas to get to the calls
10 and those kinds of things. Okay. You might have
11 to ration it, but at least you can get the ten
12 thousand gallons out of the ground that's there if
13 they have some kind of power scenario. So that's
14 another recommendation I'd make that I don't know
15 that you could make them do it, but you certainly
16 could suggest it strongly.

17 And it wouldn't have to be
18 everyone. Like you said, pick a spot. Two
19 stations in a town and say, all right, you two
20 guys, you have the largest storage, you have the
21 largest depot underground. We need you guys to
22 have the capability of running when there's no
23 power. Everybody bought a generator for Sandy. I
24 had people leaving Lake George. I pulled into the

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2 gas station. The guy who's loading six five gallon
3 cans of gasoline in the trunk of his car and I said
4 what are you doing. He goes, oh, my brother-in-law
5 down on the Island needs gas for his generator.

6 Oh, no, that's a four-hour ride. But it's a
7 four-hour ride with unprotected gasoline cans in
8 the trunk of the car.

9 So the gasoline is for so many
10 different things. Yeah, some people may go past it
11 and not deal with how -- you know, what the
12 priority is for why they need the gasoline. But it
13 doesn't do any good for people to put generators at
14 their house if they can't get any fuel. So I think
15 your thoughts on being able to retrieve the fuel
16 and somehow getting power to those is -- is quite
17 important.

18 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you very
19 much. Thank you so much for your testimony.

20 MR. LAWSKY: The -- the map you
21 mentioned, that's a paper map that you put up in
22 your --?

23 MR. LAFLURE: No -- no -- no.
24 That's on the National Grid website and you type in

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2 your county or whatever. And, of course, ours is
3 all preloaded. You type in your county and it will
4 bring up geographic. You can zoom in, zoom out,
5 and that will tell you, there will be little hedge
6 points that tell you, you know, a red point means
7 there's over five hundred. A green point may mean
8 it's less than twenty. You just follow the legend
9 that's on there.

10 MR. LAWSKY: And it changes over
11 time? All those --.

12 MR. LAFLURE: Every fifteen --
13 every fifteen minutes. So for us -- and is it
14 perfect? No. If somebody throws a switch
15 somewhere and turns some people back on, does it
16 pop up immediately? No. But it probably will in
17 the next thirty minutes. For us, I think that's
18 important.

19 We also have direct telephone
20 connections with their emergency operation center
21 in Albany. And we do have all the phone numbers
22 and sometimes we have to use them. Sometimes not.
23 We have a scenario, which I probably shouldn't tell
24 people, but there is always the possibility that

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2 you have a situation where you have no other
3 alternative but to shut the grid down. A wire is
4 on top of a car that's burning, people inside the
5 car, the firefighters need to get into that car.
6 We have a number we can call and with the right
7 questions asked and the right prompting, we have as
8 much as -- we can actually ask for a particular
9 grid to get shut down even if it's for fifteen
10 minutes.

11 It's a hardship for everybody.
12 There's all kinds of people on that grid, but
13 that's the relationship that we have with National
14 Grid. We don't use that very often. I think I've
15 used it once in the last twenty years, but the
16 bottom line is it's there if we have to have it.
17 And that kind of relationship with those people
18 that we're working with, I think is incredibly
19 important.

20 For us, National Grid, they're
21 doing one seminar next week. And two weeks after
22 that all the emergency managers from a particular
23 area are brought in, go over what's going on, kind
24 of an after action scenario. We meet with them at

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2 least once a year. I do not have their emergency
3 action plan, but they have a copy of mine. So
4 that's probably something we should work on.

5 But the other major thing is if
6 we had a serious event we got to have someone from
7 the power company in our E.O.C. The communications
8 back and forth, for me to take my time to try to
9 get a hold of my rep when he's dealing with twenty
10 other counties and to ask him a question, if I had
11 their rep right there I ask him, he then goes off
12 and gets on his cell phone and talks to the
13 supervisor or the foreman or whatever. And so that
14 is very important. Once you reach a certain
15 level -- in our case, we don't open our E.O.C.
16 unless it's -- it has to be pretty major. Irene,
17 Lee. We opened it for Sandy, didn't need it, shut
18 down twelve hours later. But for Irene and Lee, we
19 got slammed. We were in serious trouble.

20 And the problem we had is we had
21 a Memorial Day storm before we had Irene and one
22 particular town had eight inches of rain in an
23 hour. They had twelve million dollars worth of
24 damage in a town of three thousand people, so

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2 obviously there wasn't a lot of electricity. There
3 wasn't even a lot of roads. Most of them were
4 missing. And then on top of that came Irene and
5 then Lee. So our experiences I think as far as the
6 utilities go are pretty good.

7 I will echo -- we use Verizon. I
8 will echo that the telephone companies are nowhere
9 near response ready as the electric utilities are.
10 They just, okay, phone line's down. Whatever.
11 They don't react quite as quickly. We get a little
12 priority if it's a nine one one feature if
13 something's part of our PSAP. They -- they
14 definitely could use -- use some work.

15 MS. CALCATERRA: Have -- have you
16 ever had anyone from National Grid in your
17 emergency management center?

18 MR. LAFLURE: Yes.

19 MS. CALCATERRA: And that was
20 in -- what was the occasions?

21 MR. LAFLURE: That would have
22 been Irene. Now, were they there
23 twenty-four-seven? No. They were there, met with
24 us, were there for a couple hours. And they turned

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2 to us, do you need us here anymore or should we
3 move onto the next E.O.C. And with our
4 recommendation, they left.

5 There's times you open the
6 E.O.C., you got twenty-five people sitting there
7 that just don't need to be there. And should they
8 be there in a real scenario? Yeah. But if it has
9 nothing to do with their -- with their type of
10 work, we don't need them sitting there. So
11 National Grid does help us that way and if we don't
12 need them we let them go. If we need them to come
13 back, again, I talk to my rep and his backup. I
14 have their numbers. They have a hotline just for
15 this type of scenario for the business and
16 commercial customers as well as municipal. For me,
17 that works well.

18 MS. CALCATERRA: On the map that
19 you mentioned that was the outages very clearly by
20 way of triangles, does it also list the anticipated
21 restoration time?

22 MR. LAFLURE: Yes. If you
23 take -- not on the map itself. If you go to the
24 graph that's on the side, you click on your county.

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2 You can double click. It will give you all the
3 towns and you double click on a town and it will
4 tell you how many in that town are without power
5 and what the estimated restoration time is.

6 DR. COLLINS: In general, how
7 accurate are the restoration times?

8 MR. LAFLURE: I would say they're
9 within two hours. I don't know of anybody that can
10 do it better than that. It's all about, you know,
11 they go to fix a line. They have a tentative
12 restoration. They get there and, you know, there's
13 twenty-seven trees on top of their lines --.

14 DR. COLLINS: I -- I think
15 there'd be -- be -- I didn't frown. I -- if I --
16 if I had a facial expression, it was because we've
17 not heard of those kinds -- when you -- when you
18 say two hours and think that that's poor
19 performance, downstate that was dramatically great
20 performance if you get within two hours.

21 MR. LAFLURE: Right.

22 DR. COLLINS: Two -- we're
23 talk -- down there it took them, you know, they
24 would be up and running and then it would be two

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2 days before it was.

3 MR. LAFLURE: I guess we're
4 fortunate. We have a good group in our area.

5 DR. COLLINS: Can I just push
6 down that for a second? Is -- clearly, what you've
7 described is -- is good communication. Where was
8 the push for that? Was it from both sides, from
9 the utility and from -- from your organization?
10 Did -- who reached out to who or was it just a
11 mutual -- you've -- you've just gotten to know each
12 other over time? What's -- what's the key to
13 getting the good communication?

14 MR. LAFLURE: Generally, our rep,
15 and he happens to be sitting behind me, is very
16 good. He knows when something's going on. He's
17 either at the storm board or he's on his way there
18 on his cell phone, and he says look this is coming.
19 We're not sure what's going to happen or we've lost
20 a high line two counties away. We're going to have
21 to shut it down. You guys are going to have
22 trouble.

23 And he does that for two reasons.
24 Obviously as an emergency manager, but I also

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2 oversee the communication system. He wants to let
3 me know we're going to be switching you over.

4 You're going to have to switch over --.

5 DR. COLLINS: But -- but that's a
6 relationship that's developed over time and -- and
7 continues. That -- that -- is there -- is there
8 anything special done -- you talk about meeting him
9 once or twice a year and it seems like unusually
10 good communication. I'm trying to work out how we
11 could get that to happen in other places.

12 MR. LAFLURE: I -- I understand
13 what you're saying. And -- and that's true.
14 Reference Randy's talk about the conference calls,
15 when we do a conference call, the only people that
16 are on there are emergency managers, local -- I
17 don't use the term politicians -- local officials,
18 and the people that need to be on there. And they
19 have excellent questions.

20 But also on that call is the vice
21 president of that -- of that area, the eastern
22 division is what we're in, technicians or the guys
23 that know. If I say hey how about this and they
24 go, oh, that's the thirty-four five, it comes from

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2 here. We know -- I don't have to worry about
3 foolishness. I'm going to get a pretty great
4 story -- straight story.

5 And if they can't, Brian stay on
6 the line. When everybody else hangs up, we'll get
7 into it with you. And for me, that works well.
8 They schedule the conference calls. We don't. If
9 they see that they feel there's going to be an
10 issue where it's enough of a problem that they're
11 going to want to have a conference call with all
12 the emergency managers, they fire out an e-mail to
13 us or call us on the phone and we go from there.

14 I know I'm saying glowing things
15 about National Grid, but in my particular case --

16 MS. CALCATERRA: No, this is all
17 very helpful.

18 MR. LAFLURE: -- you know, we
19 have plenty of damage. And, yes, does it take time
20 to get the people there? I can send four hundred
21 trucks up to a storm location, but if they don't
22 have any poles with them, you know, you have to --
23 we look at the reality side of it as well. You can
24 send the people, but if you don't have any of the

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2 materials to do the repairs, how you going to fix
3 that.

4 I know that was a problem down on
5 the Island. You know, they're reaching across the
6 country to get that many poles, so. You got to
7 look at it realistically as well. And we're
8 fortunate our people tend to do that. They're used
9 to it.

10 MS. CALCATERRA: Well, thank you
11 very much for your testimony this evening.

12 MR. LAFLURE: No problem.

13 MS. CALCATERRA: You're very
14 helpful. I don't have anyone else who had
15 registered to testify or that information was
16 provided to me. So if there's anyone else in the
17 audience who's interested in testifying, there's a
18 seat and a microphone waiting for you. If not,
19 what I'll do is I'll mention to you -- I'd like to
20 thank everyone for coming here tonight and mention
21 to you for anyone that you believe that would have
22 or should have been here but wasn't able to make it
23 here, either we would love to have a conversation
24 with them in person, which we can certainly do, or

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2 over the phone, or if they wanted to submit
3 testimony they can do that by going to our website
4 which is Moreland dot N.Y. dot gov, and they could
5 submit it by going to the comments -- comments
6 section as well.

7 But just because they weren't
8 able to make the hearing doesn't mean that their
9 opportunity has been lost for them to contribute.
10 So we're -- the Moreland Commission's up and
11 running for the next few months and we welcome any
12 further testimony. Now I'm going to hand it over
13 to Commissioner Lawsky.

14 DR. COLLINS: You sure you don't
15 have anyone?

16 MS. CALCATERRA: What was that?

17 DR. COLLINS: Sure you don't have
18 anyone?

19 MS. CALCATERRA: I don't see
20 anyone running up to the microphone, Tony; do you?

21 DR. COLLINS: Well, anyone --
22 anyone want to?

23 MS. CALCATERRA: Well done.

24 DR. COLLINS: You have to

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2 understand the pace of life up here, Regina.

3 MR. JAQUISS: My name is Don
4 Jaquiss. I'm the director and --emergency services
5 and the fire coordinator like Brian and Ricky, from
6 Franklin County, so you talk to him up here, too.

7 But I'd just really echo Brian's,
8 you know, feelings about the -- the whole incident.
9 It -- in 1998, we had an ice storm. In 1999, we
10 had Hurricane Floyd. And Hurricane Floyd was not a
11 pleasant experience with -- it used to Niagara
12 Mohawk and now it's National Grid. And -- and
13 there was an issue with manning. They just didn't
14 have enough people. It was a transitional period.
15 But I've seen a marked increase in their response
16 and their -- the proficiency in restoring power.
17 And you got to remember, too, that when they give
18 restoration times, they're trying -- they're trying
19 to give you a worst-case scenario, so sometimes
20 they come back a lot sooner.

21 Now in Essex County, we have two
22 companies. We have National Grid and we also New
23 York State Electric and Gas. And in the past such
24 as Irene, we did have a representative in our

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2 E.O.C. Now how that happens is our staff calls
3 them up and says, hey, get somebody over here. We
4 ran for eighteen days during Irene twenty-four
5 hours a day.

6 So NYSEG was not able to provide
7 a person all the time. They were giving us updates
8 and there were areas that were impacted in their --
9 their district that were -- that were pretty
10 severe, the Town of Jay and up -- and there are
11 also the town of Wilmington's now with -- with
12 Supervisor Preston's incident, I was not really
13 aware there was an issue until I actually called
14 Supervisor Preston and he informed me that they --
15 they, in fact, did have a major power outage.

16 I then did try to contact the
17 NYSEG representatives. We have -- we have -- do
18 have numbers for power companies. We have -- we
19 have in the -- we also all run nine one one
20 centers, by the way. All the directors here run
21 nine one one centers, so we do have numbers for
22 life threatening situations, which is different
23 than somebody being without power.

24 So overall, I think one of the

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2 best things that Brian alluded to was the trimming
3 of trees. I kind of changed channels here a
4 little, but, you know, as far as keeping power
5 running, power operating, trim the trees. And
6 National Grid had an aggressive tree trimming
7 program going for the last couple years and I could
8 see the difference. I definitely could.

9 Hurricane Sandy, we stood up. It
10 was a non-event for us. But, again, we -- we asked
11 for representatives from National Grid and NYSEG to
12 be at our E.O.C. And what we did is in the
13 morning, we had -- we had twelve-hour operational
14 periods. So every twelve hours, we would have a
15 briefing. And that's where we wanted those people
16 there. We wanted them there in the morning and we
17 wanted them there in the evening to brief the
18 oncoming crews.

19 And after that they -- you know,
20 they could go out and go their merry way, go to
21 another E.O.C. We actually shared some
22 representatives such as from O.F.P.C. and different
23 agencies. We actually shared those -- those
24 representatives back and forth from Clinton, Essex,

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2 and Franklin during Irene. And -- and we would
3 have done the same thing with Sandy had it been an
4 event so. So other than that, you can ask me
5 questions and I'll try to answer them.

6 DR. COLLINS: We've heard about a
7 more aggressive tree trimming program over the last
8 few years with apparently good success. What's --
9 is there pushback from property owners?

10 MR. JAQUISS: No, I don't -- I
11 don't -- well, sometimes, I mean, it depends. If
12 you're cutting the favorite tree on the street,
13 yeah, you're going to get some pushback, you know.
14 But they're kind of isolated cases.

15 DR. COLLINS: People understand
16 the value of having a better tree trimming --?

17 MR. JAQUISS: Yes.

18 DR. COLLINS: Is that
19 communicated --?

20 MR. JAQUISS: I mean, they know
21 it's got to be done. That's what takes the power
22 lines down for the most part. You know, wind can
23 take poles down, but for the most part, probably
24 eighty percent of the time, it's trees coming down

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2 and -- and taking the power lines out. So tree
3 trimming is one of the most cost effective methods
4 they could use.

5 DR. COLLINS: Thanks.

6 MS. CALCATERRA: The -- you
7 mentioned that you had NYSEG and National Grid show
8 up at the E.O.C.s based upon your request.

9 MR. JAQUISS: Yes.

10 MS. CALCATERRA: And what
11 situation -- what has to be triggered before you
12 reach out to them for them to -- to go to your
13 E.O.C.?

14 MR. JAQUISS: It would be the
15 prediction of a major event such as Sandy. And
16 Irene kind of surprised us a little bit. I mean,
17 all the forecasts up until six hours prior were
18 that it was going to turn to the east. And it
19 actually didn't and that was a big surprise for all
20 of us, I think, was the -- the severity and the
21 intensity of the rain.

22 We got ten plus inches of rain in
23 the High Peaks. And what we got here is we don't
24 get a flood that's slow. We get flash flooding and

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2 with a lot of kinetic energy when it comes down
3 those mountains. And then it does a lot of damage,
4 particularly to infrastructure, bridges, roads, and
5 power systems -- power distribution systems.

6 MS. CALCATERRA: Can you tell me
7 about the qualifications of the folks who show up
8 from the utilities at the E.O.C.? Are they
9 handling -- or do they have emergency management
10 experience? Have they worked on storms before with
11 you? Are they familiar with the region and are
12 they able to address issues right away or do they
13 have to make a series of phone calls?

14 MR. JAQUISS: They generally --
15 I -- I don't know. I can't answer how much
16 emergency management experience they have. I -- I
17 will say they -- they usually provide information.
18 And if they don't have that information, they make
19 phone calls and get that information. But what I
20 did ask them for was at eight o'clock when we did
21 our -- our -- it's an action plan briefing that
22 they could have the stats that we needed for -- to
23 carry us through that operational period.

24 MS. CALCATERRA: And do you share

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2 a liaison with utilities with other counties as
3 well or other towns and counties?

4 MR. JAQUISS: Counties. I mean,
5 there's -- we -- we have a -- Mark Leta is the rep
6 for NYSEG on this side, but he's also the rep
7 for -- is he your rep, too? Yeah. So we share
8 him. The same with John Murphy with National Grid.

9 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you.
10 Thank you so much for testifying.

11 MR. JAQUISS: You're welcome.

12 MS. CALCATERRA: We greatly
13 appreciate it.

14 MR. PROVOST: Ricky Provost,
15 Director of Emergency Services for Franklin County.

16 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you.

17 MR. PROVOST: A couple three
18 things that have been mentioned by my colleagues
19 that I'd just like to put forward are the L.E.P.C.,
20 the Local Emergency Planning Committees are a great
21 way to -- to meet with your reps and -- and to get
22 that experience and that communication going. And
23 that's how we found that we've got our relationship
24 started with both Grid and NYSEG. I'm a split

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2 county. I have both in my county and we have a
3 great working relationship with both.

4 After the ice storm in 1998, we
5 were able to get some unmet needs funding from the
6 State of New York and the federal government,
7 and -- and that's really helped solidify our backup
8 sites, the town and local communities, the
9 generators. The hospitals were -- were allowed to
10 get generators through that program, so -- so the
11 critical infrastructure at the local level and --
12 and like our communication sites is -- is tenfold
13 better today than it was in 1998.

14 Hurricane Sandy, I had a National
15 Grid rep in my E.O.C. early in the morning on the
16 first day that we were up and running. Mr. Day,
17 who's sitting on the end, is a Clinton County
18 director. He had a NYSEG rep in his E.O.C., so we
19 just shared people back and forth.

20 Eric has some National Grid in
21 his county, so those people could just go back and
22 forth between E.O.C.s to -- to get the information
23 that they needed during the storm. And we were up
24 and running for about sixteen hours and then we --

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2 we shut down.

3 MS. CALCATERRA: Understood. And
4 do you work on -- do you have an emergency
5 management plan that you -- that you share with a
6 utility or do you participate in drills with the
7 utility for emergency management plans?

8 MR. PROVOST: Our emergency
9 management plan was built in 2007 and -- and the
10 companies -- both utilities were part of that plan.
11 As we built that plan, it went through the local
12 emergency planning committee for review and they
13 participated at that way with that. Do we do
14 direct drilling with those two -- two agencies?
15 No, we do not.

16 MS. CALCATERRA: Have you -- have
17 you used the plan?

18 MR. PROVOST: Yes.

19 MS. CALCATERRA: Because
20 sometimes I -- I understand -- that we understand
21 that plans are drafted but they're not necessarily
22 put into practice.

23 MR. PROVOST: We use our
24 comprehensive emergency management plan every time

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2 we open our emergency operations.

3 MS. CALCATERRA: Okay. And is
4 that plan shared with utilities before an emergency
5 so they understand what their -- what their roles
6 are?

7 MR. PROVOST: Absolutely.

8 MS. CALCATERRA: Do you feel that
9 there is a need to do drills?

10 MR. PROVOST: I -- I'm not sure
11 that we need to drill, but I think that
12 communication's got to be built some way. We do it
13 through our L.E.P.C., but the drilling would be
14 another -- exercises would be another way to --
15 another option to make that work.

16 MS. CALCATERRA: Understood.
17 Thank you. Thank you so very much for your
18 testimony, Mr. Provost.

19 MR. DAY: So I'm Eric Day,
20 Director of Emergency Services for Clinton County.
21 And most of what I could say to you this evening
22 would be very similar to what my counterparts
23 have -- have said, so I'll just give you a few
24 disjointed notes that I've made based on comments

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2 that -- that they've -- they've already brought
3 forth.

4 In our county, we're ninety-five
5 percent New York State Electric and Gas served for
6 an electric utility. So my experience with
7 National Grid is -- is generally pretty good.
8 It's -- it's a very small portion of the county.
9 We -- we don't have a lot of experience with --
10 with any problems with them. Generally, things go
11 pretty well.

12 NYSEG, in general, is -- is
13 pretty well -- pretty -- pretty well -- provides us
14 with a pretty good service. One of the things I
15 have noticed in -- in my career at the county is
16 that staffing at New York State Electric and Gas
17 in -- in our service area has diminished greatly.
18 Not just the one man in a bucket truck, but the --
19 the middle management, the supervisors on the road,
20 and or staff in -- in the -- in the office in the
21 physical plant. You know, when I do go there for
22 meetings, there's a lot of empty desks. And I'm
23 not saying that there needs to be a lot of full
24 desks. I mean, it's -- it's their -- their

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2 business to run. But I can tell you that I -- I
3 think we do see a difference in their storm
4 response because when -- when something happens,
5 something occurs, there are less people to go
6 around.

7 We do benefit from their ability
8 to provide us an individual in our emergency
9 operation center during a large event. So when --
10 when we activate our E.O.C., it's been discussed
11 here, we make a call to them, say, hey, we're --
12 we're standing up, and they will -- they will
13 provide somebody to come over and -- and -- and
14 work with us.

15 To answer some of your previous
16 questions, the individual typically that comes to
17 us is somebody that's a retired individual from the
18 company that they call back probably with very
19 little emergency management experience, other than
20 having gone through bigger storms, you know. Do --
21 do they have, you know, I.C.S. training, so on and
22 so forth? Probably not.

23 With that said, NYSEG, I think,
24 works pretty well in the I.C.S. world. When --

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2 when they go into the -- the -- the storm mode, the
3 response mode from the -- from the sunny day mode,
4 they -- they do utilize I.C.S. and I -- I think
5 that works pretty well for them.

6 You asked the questions earlier
7 about how -- how do we respond to wires down, that
8 response and that coordination. On an -- on an
9 everyday type response, wires down calls come into
10 our nine one one center. Usually people make nine
11 one one calls, there's wires down, trees down,
12 whatever. Typically, a fire department will be
13 dispatched because we don't know if they're live.
14 We always assume they are. They'll go -- fire
15 department will respond and, you know, keep the --
16 keep the public back.

17 We make notification to NYSEG,
18 whether it be into Binghamton. If it's not during
19 normal working hours that the Plattsburgh plant is
20 open, it's through Binghamton, which sometimes take
21 long -- if it takes a little longer for them to get
22 back and dispatch a crew to us. Our fire
23 departments will sit a wires down call for hours
24 sometimes waiting for a crew to come. And this is

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2 just on an -- on, you know, tonight let's say with
3 not a big storm in place. Sometimes a crew will
4 come very quickly.

5 If there's an -- a larger event
6 in place, they will ramp up. They'll come back to
7 the shop. They'll -- they'll have staff in their
8 shop if they have people in town and -- and we'll
9 be able to call them directly in Plattsburgh at
10 the -- at the line office and their -- their
11 response is typically a little quicker.

12 We still wait. The fire crews
13 will still wait, town crews will still wait.
14 Typically, we -- we have fire departments leaving
15 fire police sitting with lines down and waiting
16 until somebody comes or a town crew. And then
17 once -- once they say it's safe, the fire
18 department or the town crew will move lines out of
19 the way.

20 Larger events, you know, much
21 more widespread, trees down, wires down type
22 events, we -- we've utilized a task force concept
23 where, you know, coordinated through the E.O.C.
24 where we'll -- we'll actually put a utility crew

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2 with a town crew and a fire crew and -- and push
3 the three of them out together in a group and say
4 you're working on this road today or, you know,
5 this morning. And that -- that worked in 1998.

6 You know, it isn't something that
7 happens quickly, though. It -- it takes -- it
8 takes a day or two worth of wrangling to get
9 everybody in that mindset that, hey, we can't do
10 this with -- we can't do this with, you know -- you
11 know, pager goes off, let's go run to this call,
12 that call like we do every day. It takes a couple
13 days to get everybody shifted into that gear.

14 I'm jumping around, like I said,
15 kind of playing cleanup here. Verizon, horrible.
16 Please do something to Verizon. And I -- I won't
17 say anymore than -- I won't say anymore than that.
18 They -- they --.

19 MS. CALCATERRA: Did you second
20 that?

21 MR. DAY: What's that?

22 MS. CALCATERRA: We just had a
23 second and third and fourth in the audience.

24 MR. DAY: They -- they -- they

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2 are -- they -- they are much the same as NYSEG in
3 that in -- in my opinion that they're -- they are
4 basically hulled out as far as an organization.
5 When you go look at their building and their facade
6 and if you open the door, there's nobody in there,
7 in -- in my opinion.

8 I'll -- I'll give you a
9 personal -- just a personal aside about Verizon. I
10 have Verizon telephone service and Verizon
11 Internet. Had a problem with my Internet, had to
12 have them come and take a look at it. The
13 technician had to borrow a screwdriver because he
14 said they didn't have screwdrivers. So Verizon --
15 Verizon has battery backup systems on -- on their
16 phone -- on their phone boxes throughout the
17 county.

18 As -- as Brian said, you know,
19 I -- I know in -- in many of the cases which areas
20 the batteries will last only a couple hours so if
21 power goes out I know this -- this place is only
22 going to have phones for about an hour or two, four
23 here. I know they are capable of putting
24 generators at them. I've -- you know, will call

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2 them when -- when I know the batteries are going to
3 go dead and say are you going to put generators
4 out, we know the power's going to be out longer
5 than that. And we get real mixed response.

6 They're -- they're not very responsive.

7 The other thing that -- that came
8 to mind, sitting here listening to this, was a -- a
9 potential suggestion. It may be -- may be kind of
10 deep and -- and out of -- out of -- out of the
11 scope, but we deal with, on a routine basis,
12 whenever the power goes out, calls from -- nine one
13 one calls from the what the power companies call
14 critical -- critical customers, the -- the folks
15 that -- that need power for an oxygen generator or
16 a portable home ventilator, you know, for -- to --
17 to breathe. Or -- or any other sort of medical
18 type equipment.

19 More and more people, and this is
20 personal opinion, but we -- we -- we -- this is
21 backed up by experience in the nine one one center.
22 More and more people are sent home with equipment
23 to be allowed to live at home to have a quality of
24 life to -- to -- to -- you know, to -- to live at

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2 home instead of in a hospital or -- or another
3 facility somewhere with that equipment because of
4 advances in technology.

5 Insurance pays for a twenty-five
6 thousand dollar piece of equipment so somebody can
7 stay at home. And they can't breathe without that
8 piece of equipment; yet, that equipment will not
9 run without power and we can't provide that person
10 with a -- a four hundred dollar generator and --
11 and some training or some system or means that
12 somebody would come and help them with that
13 generator.

14 So as soon as the power goes out,
15 I -- I can tell you in -- in our county, we get
16 these -- these nine one one calls immediately. You
17 know, I need the generator, I need the generator, I
18 need the generator for -- for these folks that
19 are -- that are critical customers. NYSEG knows
20 who they are. NYSEG does what they can to get the
21 power back on to them, but these people are dialing
22 that number.

23 And I'm -- I'm sure you're
24 hearing this in much larger -- much larger numbers

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2 further south where the population is much more
3 dense than it is here. But it -- it would seem to
4 me that the -- the system that provides this
5 equipment to these individuals should be looked at
6 to somehow accommodate a backup -- a means of
7 backup power to -- to assist those folks, to -- to
8 give a little longer window for the utility or for
9 the emergency responder.

10 You know, we -- we end up
11 immediately taxing our fire departments to rush out
12 and -- and, you know, bring fifteen hundred watt
13 generators around to four or five homes to take
14 care of people whenever the power goes out so that
15 they can -- you know, they can continue to -- to
16 live. And -- and then we go and take care of other
17 problems.

18 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you. That
19 was very helpful.

20 MR. DAY: Thank you.

21 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you so
22 very much for testifying. Greatly appreciate it.

23 (Off-the-record discussion)

24 MS. CALCATERRA: Anyone else

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2 interested in testifying? Well, I'm going to turn
3 it over to Commissioner Lawsky then.

4 MR. LAWSKY: I do the formality.

5 This hearing is adjourned. Thank you all for
6 testifying. It was very helpful and it's great to
7 be with you in the North Country.

8 MS. CALCATERRA: Thank you.

9 DR. COLLINS: Thank you.

10 (The hearing adjourned at 7:44
11 p.m.)

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STATE OF NEW YORK

I, Howard Hubbard, do hereby certify that the foregoing was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place, as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of pages 1 through 99, is a true record of all proceedings had at the hearing.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name, this the 4th day of March, 2013.

Howard Hubbard, Reporter

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