

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

August 11, 2020

Mr. John McAvoy
President & CEO
Consolidated Edison Inc.
4 Irving Place
New York, New York 10003

Dear Mr. McAvoy,

We are writing to express our deep concern over the prolonged power outages for hundreds of thousands of New York households following Tropical Storm Isaias. While the impact from the storm resulted in substantial and widespread property damage, dangerous road conditions and closures, downed trees, and power outages across the Northeast, it is unacceptable that tens of thousands of New Yorkers are still without electricity one week after the weather event, and will potentially remain without power for even longer.

While we recognize the enormous efforts that Con Edison has done and is currently doing to restore power to your affected customers, we are troubled that many of the lessons learned and recommendations from the New York Public Service Commission (PSC) for best practices related to prior severe weather events went unheeded.

Following Superstorm Sandy in 2012 and most recently, Winter Storms Riley and Quinn in 2018, the PSC launched investigations to review electric utility companies' responses to outages that occurred during the storms, as well as ongoing power utility infrastructure issues. The PSC subsequently directed the utility companies to implement and incorporate recommendations based on the Commission's findings into their Emergency Response Plans (ERP). Many of the issues that we have heard from constituents, as well as municipal and elected leaders, related to Con Edison's performance in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Isaias, echo many of the deficiencies from past complaints.

Accordingly, we would like answers to the following questions related to those recommendations and their implementation, as well as concerns that have been raised with us about Con Edison's response during the past week.

1. When was the initial request for mutual assistance placed to the Regional Mutual Assistance Group and how did you determine the appropriate number of crews to request?
2. What were the levels of your internal capabilities pre-storm? Minimum Staffing Matrices are stipulated in your ERP that prescribes the initial resources required for all storm roles, based upon the predicted impact of anticipated storm or storm-like conditions and your respective incident response level. Please describe how those matrices were used to develop mutual assistance requests.

3. There have been reports that communication with municipal officials continues to have problems as Con Edison community liaisons at times did not have the most current information themselves. Communication to customers was reportedly even worse as texts and emails with Estimated Times of Restoration (ETR) were wrong; online outage maps listed erroneous information (e.g., some houses without power were listed as resolved or not listed at all); criticism from on-the-ground Con Edison line personnel to customers stated that the lack of progress in an affected area was due to needed action by municipalities; and daily dry ice locations were only posted on Con Edison's website and in press releases but not communicated directly to customers, resulting in many showing up at wrong locations. What accounted for these continued communication issues?
4. With regard to vegetation management, there have been reports that some people had been trapped inside of their homes with live downed wires for days, with only a wire guard at their location but no crews. Please explain why those locations with live downed wires were not prioritized?
5. Pursuant to the Storm Hardening Plan submitted to the Department of Public Service in September 2019 as recommended by the PSC, Con Edison detailed critical future storm hardening measures to repair and replace aging electrical infrastructure that was deemed to see historically higher instances of outages. What is the status of this work? Is there a correlation between the identified sites and the hardest-hit outage locations?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to receiving your prompt answers. Should you wish to discuss these questions in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact our offices.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator