



New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

May 9, 2008

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NJBPU TO ENGAGE IN COMPREHENSIVE STAKEHOLDER REVIEW OF VEGETATION MANAGEMENT RULES

(NEWARK, NJ) – The Commissioners of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) yesterday unanimously voted to review vegetation management regulations as part of a process to continuously improve the reliability of New Jersey’s electric power network.

In August 2003, a massive electric power outage was caused after a tree came into contact with a transmission line in Ohio. This incident left over 50 million people in the northeast United States and southeastern Canada without electric power. After the blackout, the United States Department of Energy issued a report which instructed the electric companies to develop vegetation management programs. After a comprehensive two year stakeholder process, New Jersey enacted a preliminary set of Vegetation Management rules in December 2006 in order to ensure consistency across New Jersey’s four electric distribution companies. These rules were re-adopted by the Board in February 2008 as part of an overall readoption of the Electric Service rules. The additional review accepted by the Board on yesterday is specific to Subchapter 9, Vegetation Management, and will include consideration of reduced requirements surrounding agricultural crops, as well as additional discretion for utilities within the Right of Way border zone.

“Based upon our decision, the Board is providing an opportunity for an extensive public participation process that will allow stakeholders to bring ideas to the table for the Board to consider as we review these important regulations,” said NJBPU President Jeanne M. Fox. “While the reliability of the electric system, the safety of the personnel maintaining the electric system, and the safety of the public are paramount, environmental and aesthetic impacts must also be considered.”

New Jersey has approximately 1,500 miles of electric transmission wires across the state. As the most densely populated state in the country, transmission line failures affect a greater proportion of the state’s residents than anywhere else in the nation. New Jersey’s vegetation management regulations are essential to protect the reliability of the grid and avoid the discomfort and economic loss associated with outages.

The NJBPU will ask the state’s electric utilities to coordinate their vegetation management activities with the rulemaking process until the vegetation management rule is formally adopted. The rulemaking will include comments accepted from the public, a stakeholder meeting after the comments are completed, a public meeting if needed, and a 60-day comment period after the subchapter is published in the New Jersey Register. Residents are encouraged to discuss any of their specific issues with their respective utility vegetation managers and foresters during the rulemaking process.

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About the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBP)

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities is a state agency and regulatory authority mandated to ensure safe, adequate, and proper utility services at reasonable rates for New Jersey customers. Critical services regulated by the NJBP include natural gas, electricity, water, wastewater, telecommunications and cable television. The Board has general oversight responsibility for monitoring utility service, responding to consumer complaints, and investigating utility accidents. To find out more about the NJBP, visit our web site at www.nj.gov/bpu.