

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

August 7, 2020

Mr. Charles E. Jones, Jr.
President & Chief Executive Officer
FirstEnergy
76 South Main Street
Akron, Ohio 44308

Mr. James V. Fakult
President
Jersey Central Power & Light
331 Newman Springs Road, Building 3
Red Bank, New Jersey 07701

Dear Mr. Jones and Mr. Fakult:

I write regarding the abysmal response of Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L), a subsidiary of FirstEnergy Corporation, to the threat and aftermath of Tropical Storm Isaias. I am particularly concerned about JCP&L's response to this event in light of both the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recent prediction of an "extremely active" hurricane season — during an already record-breaking storm year — and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to information provided by your company as of 4 pm yesterday, more than 289,000 people in JCP&L's territory remained without power. I understand that it may take until late on August 11th — nearly five days from now, and a full week after the storm — to restore power to most of those customers. This is simply unacceptable, especially given summer temperatures and the fact that many people are working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is particularly egregious that JCP&L is once again failing to communicate with its customers in any meaningful way. The company is simply not sharing enough information with customers that they can use to plan accordingly for the coming days. The company's failure to communicate in real time with meaningful, accurate information has been an ongoing problem and only seems to get worse with each passing storm season.

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Unfortunately, unreliable service, prolonged outages and lack of communication are nothing new to your company. Last year, a series of powerful thunderstorms moved through New Jersey and caused multi-day outages throughout the state. In 2018, another series of storms resulted in a similar situation.

In order to more fully understand the root causes of JCP&L's failure to adequately prepare for and respond to the major storms that have become a fixture in our state in recent years, I ask that you respond to the following questions:

1. In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy left millions of people throughout New Jersey without power for a week or more. Since that time, JCP&L and other utilities have reportedly invested billions to address resilience issues that came to light in the aftermath of that superstorm. Yet, JCP&L continues to suffer more damage and slower recovery times than other utilities. What investments has JCP&L made in resiliency and why? Please provide a detailed list of the most significant investments and a justification for each.
2. It's clear that technology alone will not address the poor reliability of the JCP&L system. For many years, critics have claimed that JCP&L's reliability issues have more to do with management issues that won't be solved by building more infrastructure. Recent issues with JCP&L's parent company in Ohio certainly do nothing to dispel that concern. Gregory Booth, a consultant to the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel, has specifically pointed to the role that non-infrastructure issues play in the excessive duration of outages on JCP&L's system. These issues include the quantity of personnel available to respond to an outage and the adequacy of the personnel dispatched for outage restoration, as well as the communication processes to establish the location of the outage, among other things. Since Hurricane Sandy, what changes in management and operations has JCP&L made to address these matters? What steps will JCP&L commit to in order to address the problematic response to Isaias?
3. Recently, a spokesman for your company stated, "It will take some time due to the severity of the damage, with many downed trees which impact the most isolated outages." Adequate vegetation management is critical to the reliability of any utility, both for distribution and transmission, particularly in central New Jersey with its abundance of trees. How much financial and employee effort has JCP&L put into its vegetation management program in New Jersey since Hurricane Sandy? Please provide plans and budgets for your company's vegetation management efforts in New Jersey since 2013.
4. Finally, local officials throughout the region continue to complain justifiably about JCP&L's lack of communication with customers and government officials during these outages. Even when outages are planned in order to effect repairs, JCP&L has failed to inform local businesses and government leaders of its plans. How does JCP&L intend to address the concerns raised by state and local officials as well as customers regarding its

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inadequate communication efforts? Please provide a detailed description of your current communication efforts as well as changes you propose to make to address shortcomings.

I request that you respond to the issues raised in this letter as soon as possible and, in any event, by no later than August 21, 2020. Should you wish to discuss this matter in detail, please contact me, or Tuley Wright with the Committee staff at (202) 225-4407 or tuley.wright@mail.house.gov.

JCP&L has had major issues with reliability and service for more than a decade. The law grants JCP&L an exclusive monopoly over territory within New Jersey in return for providing adequate and reliable electric service at just and reasonable prices to the population within that territory. I remain concerned that FirstEnergy and JCP&L are failing to meet their obligations under both the Federal Power Act and state law. I hope that you will provide a response that demonstrates that your company is capable of fulfilling its obligation to serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Pallone, Jr." in a cursive style.

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman