



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

The Rockland Comeback: Hurricane Sandy One Year Later

David Carlucci

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Senator Carlucci, Clarkstown Supervisor Gromack Announce New Laws and Agreements to Improve Response Capabilities One Year After Superstorm Sandy

NEW CITY - Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) and Clarkstown Supervisor Alex Gromack today marked the one-year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy by announcing new plans to respond quicker in the event of a future major storm to hit the Lower Hudson Valley. They were both joined by representatives of Orange & Rockland Utilities and Local Laborers 754 who came out to support the latest initiative that will greatly enhance communication and cooperation with state, town and local municipalities.

Senator Carlucci said, "One year ago we stood in this very spot and recognized there was a need to respond better and faster to 21st century storms that hit our area. Every time a storm hits our area we can't expect be trapped in our own backyards for days or weeks on end. This new response plan is the right way to tackle a future crisis effectively instead of wasting valuable time organizing a haphazard response."

The officials announced the agreement at a news conference in New City, where nearly one year ago today the same neighborhood was blockaded by downed trees and live wires, creating a hazardous situation for residents. While Town of Clarkstown Highway crews sought to clear these roads, their efforts were complicated by Orange & Rockland workers that were at the same time instructed to safeguard downed wires, leaving cleanup to be prolonged by a lack of coordination. It further hindered efforts to restore power in a timely fashion.

In total, over 100,000 households last year lost power as a result of the storm while major physical destruction ensued on residential properties. As a result, this created chaos for commuters on our roadways, especially in instances where intersections no longer had operational traffic signals.

Clarkstown Supervisor Alex Gromack said, "What we learned from Hurricane Sandy was that municipalities collectively had hundreds of Highway workers ready to clear roads but their efforts were thwarted until downed wires were de-energized. Senator Carlucci's legislation will dramatically improve Town highway departments ability to open the roads. The Town of Clarkstown has had numerous important meetings with Orange and Rockland over the last year that should improve communication and emergency response during outages."

Downed Wire Legislation

In an effort to address this dilemma, Senator Carlucci introduced and help pass the first ever comprehensive live wire legislation into law. This new law now requires any gas or electric corporation in the state to annually submit an emergency response plan to the Public Service Commission for review and approval. The plan must address a number of criteria, including appropriate safety precautions regarding electrical hazards, including plans to promptly secure downed wires within 36 hours of notification of the location of such downed wires from a municipal emergency official.

In order to make sure utility companies comply with these new regulations, the law also contains stiff new fines for companies that are found to be in violation. These include:

- \$100,000 or two one-hundredths of one percent of a corporation's annual gross operating revenue for each offense, with each day being considered a distinct offense;
- \$250,000 or three one-hundredths of one percent of a corporation's annual gross operating revenue for failing to reasonably comply with a provision specifically for the protection of human safety or prevention of damage to real property;
- \$500,000 or four one-hundredths of one percent of a corporation's annual gross operating revenue for failing to reasonably comply with a provision to ensure reliability and continuity of electrical service, including but not limited to restoration following a major outage emergency.

Utilizing Our Local Workforce

Working with O&R and local labor officials, the Senator was also instrumental in successfully working out a first of its kind memorandum of understanding that will avoid any stalled action during an emergency such as Hurricane Sandy.

Through this new memorandum O&R would now be able to utilize Local Laborers Union 17/754 in order to use the work force we have right here locally in Rockland. By utilizing a local workforce, it would not only avoid paying more for an outside workforce, but it would dramatically cut down on outage time and would enable more trained workers focusing on turning our community back on.

O&R Vice President for Operations Francis Peverly said, “This new plan further fortifies O&R’s storm fighting resources by developing a specially trained local supplemental workforce that can react more quickly to support our overall repair and restoration efforts. And, the plan provides jobs for our neighbors.”

Steven Reich of Laborers Local 754 said, “Laborers Local 754 would like to thank Senator Carlucci for his work in taking the lessons learned from Irene and Sandy and using them to solve real problems faced by the people of Rockland County. We would also like to thank Orange and Rockland for being open to new ideas and their willingness to see how working together with local labor can be a win/win situation for both O&R and the community both logistically and economically.”

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