

Members of the Senate and Assembly, and particularly members who represent the City of Yonkers:

I thank for you holding this very necessary hearing to investigate the negligent response of Con Edison to the recent storm.

We can all agree that Con Edison's response to Tropical Storm Isaias was significantly negligent, particularly since the storm was tracked well in advance of its arrival in the New York Metropolitan area. At least a day before the storm made landfall on August 3rd, its track was well-established and indicated that New York City lay dead center in the predicted path.

The only question was whether it would stay exactly on track, veer eastward, or veer westward. Regardless of which of those three paths it took, significant damage to New York City and its environs was forecast. In fact, as we now know, the storm veered westward, leaving New York City and Westchester to be hit by the highest winds, which are always to the east of the storm's center.

I think it is essential for this hearing to determine not only what actions Con Ed undertook to have its own repair and restoration crews available, but at what point did it request assistance from other utility companies?

We can all acknowledge that a storm such as Isaias is beyond the ability of any one utility company to handle, and that mutual assistance is required. But when did Con Ed request that assistance? Was it when they first knew that this storm was likely to cause devastating outages in New York City and Westchester, or was it after the fact, when the damage had already occurred and it would be days before those crews could arrive from the Midwest and other states?

Was Con Ed trying to save money by hoping for the best, when their job was to plan not just for the worst, but for what was most likely to happen?

If so, then we can say that Con Ed's attempt to save a few dollars on their end resulted in tens of millions of dollars in damages for their customers, not to mention the misery of going without electricity for up to a week or more during one of the hottest weeks of the year.

The evening of the storm Con Ed reported 11,495 customers out. But we are also aware of entire apartment buildings that were without power yet did not appear on the outage map. So that number is suspect. Two days later only 2,999 customers were restored. One week later (8/11), we still had 729 customers out.

For the first two days after the storm we saw hardly any crews in Yonkers, and even after that the number was inadequate. It was not until those out of state crews began to arrive that we experienced real progress in restoring outages.

This storm caused hundreds of downed trees in Yonkers, and so we had tree crews ready to go, to remove trees that had fallen and were entangled in wires. But our crews cannot approach a downed tree until Con Ed arrives on the scene to determine that the wires are not still live.

Our Fire Department recorded approximately 230 calls for wires down on August 4th, with 30 to 60 calls backed up during a 12 hour period. Normally if Con Ed cannot respond in a timely fashion to make repairs they will assign a wire sitter to ensure a potentially live wire does not constitute a hazard. This did not happen during this storm, meaning that our Fire and Police Departments had to perform this task as best they could, which severely compromised their ability to respond to other public safety calls. The Police

Department and our call center reported another 150 situations. In at least two incidents our Police Department had to guard downed wires for more than 30 hours because Con Ed did not show up. We had a school vandalized because the power was out and the generator eventually ran out of fuel, leaving it dark and without security alarms.

Unfortunately Con Ed responded many times to Yonkers residents by telling them repairs were being held up because the City was not able to remove trees. The truth was just the opposite. We had tree crews that could not remove trees because Con Ed had not shown up to inspect the wires. This was still going on four days after the storm.

As we know final restorations were not made until more than a week after the storm.

Con Ed has made promises in the past to train our DPW personnel as wire watchers. But that training never occurred. This would be more efficient, and less expensive, than deploying fire and police officers to fulfill this function.

Con Ed had stated in the past that local electrical contractors to assist with the process of identifying live wires and working with local DPW personnel. We saw no evidence of this.

It is not enough to determine where Con Ed fell short and insist they do better next time. There must be a penalty. I believe Con Ed failed to take adequate measures, and failed to order mutual aid crews in time, because they wanted to save money. So we need to make them understand that when they try to save money by short changing the public, it will in fact cost them money. The financial penalty must be many times greater than the amount that Con Ed thought they could save. Then perhaps next time they will be more responsible.