

Secretary Sullivan Calls for Department of Public Utilities to Investigate Utilities' Preparation for and Response to October Snow Storm

At Governor Patrick's direction, Secretary asks DPU to launch an inquiry into the handling of issues related to last weekend's winter storm

BOSTON – Friday, November 4, 2011 – At the direction of Governor Deval Patrick, Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary (EEA) Richard K. Sullivan Jr. today asked the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to investigate the preparation for and response to the October 29 snow storm by the state's investor-owned utilities. The new investigation proposed by Secretary Sullivan would follow an ongoing DPU investigation of storm preparation and power restoration efforts by two utilities following Tropical Storm Irene. The review will compile information and data that will be used to achieve improvements in service during future storm events.

In response to customer and municipal concerns, Secretary Sullivan called on the DPU to order an investigation to examine how the state's investor-owned electric distribution companies responded to the October 29 snow storm, focusing on the companies' efforts to restore electric power, as well as their communications with affected communities. As part of this investigation, the DPU would investigate whether, in preparation for and response to the most recent storm, the companies complied with DPU regulations and fully implemented their Emergency Response Plans, which were last filed in May 2011.

The DPU adopted an order on September 15 to launch an inquiry into the handling of power outages related to the August 28 storm by National Grid and NSTAR, focusing on the companies' efforts to restore electric power, as well as their communications with affected communities. In addition, as a matter of course, the DPU requires all four of the utilities (National Grid, NSTAR, Massachusetts Electric Company and Unitil) to submit 30-day post-storm reports. Those reports, which have already been filed by the companies in relation to Tropical Storm Irene, require the utilities to include a section on lessons learned and specifically suggest recommendations that will help them improve performance for the upcoming winter storm season.

"Throughout the week, I heard from utility customers and local and state officials who were dissatisfied with overall restoration efforts. This expanded investigation will provide the public with a forum to share their concerns and for the DPU to analyze feedback and data," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr.

The inquiry requested by Secretary Sullivan would focus on compliance with DPU's performance standards for emergency preparedness and restoration of

service, including: (1) preparation for and management of the restoration efforts; (2) allocation of company resources in the affected communities; (3) communications with state, local municipal and public safety officials, and with the department; (4) dissemination of timely information to the public; and (5) identification of company practices requiring improvement, if any.

For more information on DPU's authority under the General Laws, visit <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2009/Chapter133>.

The DPU would schedule meetings in affected areas in Western and Central Massachusetts for the additional investigation requested by Secretary Sullivan today.