

Village of Scarsdale

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December 12, 2012

Mr. Kevin Burke
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer
Consolidated Edison, Inc.
4 Irving Place
New York, NY 10003

Re: Village of Scarsdale: Con Ed Storm Postmortem

Dear Mr. Burke:

As our Village in particular and our region generally, continues to recover from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Sandy, we write to you for several reasons. First, we note that with approximately 75% of the Village residents without power immediately after the storm, and many lines down in the streets, the job of restoring power was a significant effort.

However, the restoration of power was a process fraught with frustration, confusion and anger on the part of both Village residents and Village staff that in our view could have, and should have, been avoidable. If Con Ed had a plan in place to deal with the storm, its existence was not apparent. Poor communications plagued the restoration effort impeding the work itself and fueling residents' stress and frustration. Even when the restoration crews eventually began appearing in the Village in the second week after the storm, critical deficiencies in staffing on the part of Con Ed contributed to prolonging hazardous conditions.

We think that Con Ed should and could do better --- a lot better -- and so we are conveying our views on areas where we believe substantial improvements are needed. Included in our suggestions are some regarding logistics and staffing that we would like Con Ed to consider seriously.

Logistics and Staffing Issues

Logistics: For four days after the storm hit, not a single restoration Con Ed crew was dispatched to Scarsdale. Once work crews did arrive in Scarsdale, the matter of prioritizing work sites in the Village became an issue. Scarsdale's Department of Public Works Supervisor initially provided crews with priority locations where trees and power lines blocked primary roadways and dead ends, but thereafter, the crews picked their spots. Since many of the crews were from out of state, they had no familiarity with the Village streets and could not know which should be given priority. More importantly, the out-of-state crews had no familiarity with the grid in Scarsdale and so, without Con Ed's guidance, could not know what specific area would benefit from a particular restoration.

We suggest that this logistics issue might be mitigated if Con Ed made available to Village staff the Scarsdale grid map, infrastructure maps and other detailed information about the system in the Village. This would allow them to direct out of state work crews during times when Con Ed personnel was not available to do so – which was most of the time in the first week of the outage.

Staffing: A major bottleneck in getting streets cleared of debris and repairs underway was the lack of sufficient Con Ed personnel trained to de-energize and cut fallen lines. This became a significant factor once work crews began appearing in the Village as they were unable to work in the most severely blocked streets until they could be assured that the lines involved were not live. For much of the outage, there was only one Con Ed person present in the Village trained to do this work and the shortage of trained personnel contributed greatly to prolonging the clearance of streets blocked by debris that was entangled with downed power lines.

In addition, work was further delayed by the insistence of the primary crew chief that the appropriate Con Ed supervisor issue individual work tickets for each and every location. Hazardous conditions were prolonged unnecessarily and safety issues increased due to the centralized approach used by Con Ed, especially in the case of dead-end streets and streets blocked at both ends by debris entangled in downed lines.

We therefore have several suggestions on these staffing matters that we ask Con Ed to consider seriously:

- Staff crews so that each crew is comprised of personnel having all the necessary skills to de-energize and cut lines, clear debris and restore power, as opposed to staffing crews whose members have only one of the three necessary skills.
- Train and authorize local licensed electricians to de-energize and cut lines during an emergency when Con Ed is short-handed. Con Ed would make the requisite training available to area electricians who volunteer for the program. Con Ed could provide the Village with a list of the electricians who had been trained and qualified to do de-energizing work and during an emergency, the Village could contact these electricians to perform de-energizing work if sufficient Con Ed personnel were not available to do so. This in turn would allow debris to be cleared from streets more quickly and power restoration work to move forward. Con Ed would cover the cost of the work performed by the local electricians.
- Decentralize the work assignment function so that at the municipal level there is an individual with command authority to direct and manage work crews.

Poor Coordination within Con Ed. The root of many of the problems was attributable to a lack of communications within Con Ed itself. The information needed by Village staff and residents was basic:

- Where are the work crews?
- When are they coming?
- How many crews have been dispatched to the Village?
- What areas in the Village are they being dispatched to?
- When will power be restored?
- What are the specific areas of Scarsdale in which power is restored?

Answers to these types of questions from Con Ed personnel were not provided during the first week of the outage. It was not until well into the second week of the outage that any information of this sort started to be furnished.

The municipal representative assigned to Scarsdale by Con Ed:

- rarely had the facts available that Village staff needed,
- was unable to obtain the quantity of crews with the needed skill-sets to complete the required work,
- lacked authority to make command decisions to direct and manage the crews assigned to Scarsdale, and
- lacked the technical training and expertise on Con Ed's power grid system necessary in a restoration effort of this magnitude.

Storm events such as the one just experienced are as foreseeable as they are severe. The Village staff and residents reasonably expect Con Ed to have a coordinated plan that works when such storms hit the region. The breakdown in Con Ed's execution of its response to the storm was unacceptable and it must be re-examined and remediated in anticipation of future events.

Communications Issues

Communications during and after the storm failed in at least two different respects:

- communications from Con Ed to Village staff, and
- communications from Con Ed to residents.

Poor Communications from Con Ed to Village Staff. As noted, not a single restoration Con Ed crew was dispatched to Scarsdale for four days after the storm and no one from Con Ed could give an answer as to when restoration work in the Village would begin. During and after the storm, Village staff participated in daily updates by Con Ed personnel on the status of outages and the timing of restoration efforts. Though the calls were frequent, they did not

convey much in the way of specific information. For example, in response to the most pressing question as to when power was going to be restored, Con Ed personnel repeatedly gave out a blanket response intended to cover the entire Village saying at one point power would be restored by November 9th and at another point by November 11th. No effort was made to break this response down to neighborhoods. The impression these responses created was that Con Ed was simply trying to “manage expectations” rather than come up with a more detailed response that would have allowed residents to make plans to manage their lives during the power outage.

This communications failure, which made it impossible for Village staff to convey specific information to residents, engendered a great deal of ill feeling among residents who made it plain to us that they would have preferred more precise information – even if that information was that the outage would last longer.

Poor Communications from Con Ed to Residents. Direct communications by Con Ed to residents was virtually non-existent. Contacting Con Ed was very difficult as its contact line was consistently busy. When contact was made, responses given by Con Ed representatives answering Con Ed phone lines were no more informative than the information given to the Village. Questions residents had about the status of the repair effort being made – the location of repair crews in the area and the timing of repairs, were often not answerable by the Con Ed representatives. The problem caused by this lack of information from a central source was compounded by seemingly inconsistent information or observations in the field made by residents. Work crews parked in Village parking lots and conversations with members of those crews created one set of impressions about the work being done, while Con Ed representatives lacking specific information created another. This added to resident frustration and stress.

What might have been useful under the circumstances would have been a phone bank of Con Ed representative located in an unaffected area and briefed with accurate information that could have been furnished to callers.

The one source of direct communication to residents that was accessible to residents who could get access to the internet was the Con Ed outage map. However, this too left much to be desired as it was rarely accurate. Rather than providing useful information, the map often showed no outages where outages actually existed and outages where power had been restored. Thus, a device that could have proved useful instead contributed to the chaos.

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The storm we experienced was severe. However, we were under the impression that the types of fundamental breakdowns we experienced would be addressed by Con Ed. That impression was created in part from a meeting and discussions had more than two years ago in the spring of 2010 among Village officials, Assemblywoman Amy R. Paulin and Ms. Sandra Miller, then Director of Public Affairs of Con Ed. Those discussions were summarized in a letter dated April 12, 2010 from Assemblywoman Paulin to Ms. Miller, a copy of which is attached for your reference. The letter reports that among other things, Mr. Timothy Cawley of Con Ed stated at the meeting that “downed wires are the first priority.” Con Ed’s response this time around did not demonstrate that this was the case.

Apparently, the discussions that took place in 2010 did little to improve Con Ed's emergency planning or execution. While we thank Con Ed and all the out-of-state crews brought in by Con Ed for the hard work it took to eventually restore power to our Village, we believe the crisis could have been much better managed. Therefore, we would like to arrange a meeting at the earliest possible time between senior Con Ed officials and Village staff to address the concerns expressed in this letter. We would also be interested in learning about Con Ed's capital plan and what repairs and improvements in the system that powers our Village Con Ed intends to make in light of the damage it suffered in the most recent storm and in prior large storms that affected the region. Further, we would like to begin working with Con Ed to formulate a long-range plan to underground all or a significant portion of the power lines in Scarsdale. Please contact Al Gatta, our Village Manager (tel.: 914.722.1110; email: manager@scarsdale.com), to arrange a meeting. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Very truly yours,

Mayor Miriam Levitt Flisser
Robert J. Steves, Deputy Mayor
Kay Eisenman, Trustee
Jonathan I. Mark, Trustee
Stacey Brodsky, Trustee
Robert H. Harrison, Trustee
David S. Lee, Trustee

Cc: Andrew Cuomo, Governor
Robert Abrams and Benjamin Lawsky,
Co-Chairs, Moreland Commission to Investigate
and Study Utility Companies' Storm Preparation
and Management
Garry A. Brown,
Chairman, New York Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Services, NYS Department of Public Service
Andrea Stewart Cousins, NY State Senator, 35th District
Amy R. Paulin, NY Assemblywoman, 88th District
Rob Astorino, Westchester County Executive
Nita Lowey, U.S. Congresswoman
Eliot L. Engel, U.S. Congressman
Alfred A. Gatta, Scarsdale Village Manager
Linda Leavitt, Editor, *The Scarsdale Inquirer*



AMY R. PAULIN
Assemblywoman 88th District
Westchester County

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
Committee on
Oversight, Analysis & Investigation
COMMITTEES
Children and Families
Education
Health
Higher Education

April 12, 2010

Ms. Sandra Miller
Director of Public Affairs for Con Edison
511 Theodore Fremd Avenue
Rye, New York 10580

Dear Ms. Miller:

I appreciate your quick response to my request to meet with me, Mayor Stevens and Village of Scarsdale officials, Steve Pappalardo and Benny Salanitro regarding your response to the storm that left 80% of Scarsdale residents, Village Hall and some schools without power for up to one week.

This letter summarizes our discussion including your explanation of the strategy and process employed to restore power to the Village, and some suggestions to improve Con Ed's Emergency Management System in the future.

Perhaps the most puzzling issue is why it took three days to restore power to Village Hall and if Con Ed knew it would take three days, why they didn't provide a generator. Village Hall is communication central during severe storms. The loss of power for any length of time, put the residents at risk by hindering the administration from effectively communicating with residents and coordinating with the police and fire departments to carry out basic safety precautions such as traffic control and accident prevention due to live wires, fires etc. Mr. Cawley responded that downed wires are the first priority, then hospitals, pump stations, nursing homes and then schools and municipal buildings.

The Village officials clearly stated that given the extent of the damage and the extraordinarily dangerous situation, restoring power to Village Hall should have been a higher priority. As Con Ed's representatives you agreed that in the future Con Ed needs to give a higher priority to Village Hall. Further, you stated that there was some miscommunication between the liaisons in the field and the operational managers and that in the future Con Ed will work to improve these communications as it is an integral part of a successful Incident Command System. Although not yet perfect, the liaison in Scarsdale was very good and we fully support continuing the practice.

We also questioned why too little restoration was accomplished in the first few days. You stated that the restoration process currently uses a "top down" rather than "clustering" approach to determine the number of residences without power. Mr. Cawley reported that because circuits crossover municipal boundaries, this top down approach doesn't allow Con Ed to assess damage as a percentage of the total number of households and businesses affected in any given municipality. For example, Con Ed will see that there are a larger number of people without power in the Yonkers area and go to that area first instead of responding to a smaller number but higher percentage (80% vs. 15%) of residences in Scarsdale.

Using the "top down" approach also explains why there was a disproportionately low number of crews working in Soarsdale verses other municipalities with fewer incidences of outages. Mr. Cawley stated that Con Ed is revisiting this "top down" vs. "clustering" approach for restoring power. The PSC guidelines do however, allow for a "least effort" approach whereby Con Ed can restore first, those areas that require the least amount of time, workers, and effort which explains why some municipalities were restored within one or two days.

Other issues which were raised regarding the slow restoration pace were: a lack of readily available materials, insufficient crews, confusion of responsibilities between Con Ed and municipalities and between Con Ed and Verizon,

You reported to us that Con Ed does not determine when and how many crews to call-in from other parts of the state and country by the number of calls received, but rather on the severity of the storm. In this case, Con Ed started calling for help by Sunday. You contended that there was no problem with the availability of materials nor was there a problem with when, where and how to assign crews. You felt that there were a sufficient number of experienced managers at each staging site.

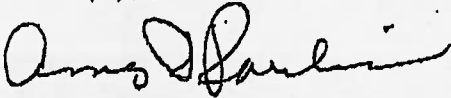
Many residents complained that they saw Con Ed workers sitting in trucks or cars doing nothing. We feel a more substantive explanation of this issue is needed.

Regarding who is responsible for the various clearing activities, you stated that Con Ed is responsible for removing and/or securing any live wires before the Village can remove the trees. The Village can clear trees if no wires or poles are involved. There is still confusion about whether it is Con Ed's responsibility or Verizon's when a pole is involved. This problem of ultimate responsibility also needs further clarification.

We would like to have a follow-up meeting with you after your meeting with the PSC.

Again, thank you for your cooperation and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Amy R. Paulin
Member of Assembly

Cc: Mayor Carolyn Stevens
Steve Pappalardo
Benedict Salanitro
Timothy Cawley
Carlos Torres
Dan Lyons