



Testimony by:

United Water Pennsylvania, Inc.

Utility Response to Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee

Before

Joint Hearing of the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure and

Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees

Presented by:

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HR 1, North Office

Testimony

by

John Hollenbach, United Water Pennsylvania, Inc

Good Morning Senators. I am John Hollenbach, General Manager and Vice President of both United Water Pennsylvania and United Water Delaware.

United Water Pennsylvania provides water service to approximately 57,000 customers in portions of eight counties through four geographically separate water operations. The estimated population served is 160,000 people. The counties include Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Luzerne, Perry, Schuylkill, Wyoming and York.

I will take some time this morning to discuss how Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee affected the operations and customers of United Water Pennsylvania.

First, let me recap the events of Hurricane Irene. Early predictions of Hurricane Irene and its potential impact to several United Water operations along the East Coast prompted United Water to set up a central command center in Boise, Idaho, along with setting up command centers at each of its locations. Here in Pennsylvania, we set up our command center at the Pennsylvania corporate office on East Park Drive in Harrisburg. This strategy of having both a local and national command center proved very successful, as proactive action plans were coordinated and communicated throughout the entire event. While flooding was not a major concern in PA with Hurricane Irene, high winds took its toll on all of our PA operations. At the height of the storm, we lost power at three of our water treatment facilities, eleven wells and

five pumping stations. Back-up generators kept the water flowing at the water treatment plants while we mobilized portable generators to keep the other stations in operation. Three days later when power was finally restored to all the facilities, it was reported that only 150 of our 57,000 plus customers had their water service impacted.

In addition to addressing our own issues during Hurricane Irene, UWPA received requests for assistance from water providers outside of United Water's territory. Via the PA WARN system, UWPA provided water buffalos for the Harvey's Lake residents and generator assistance for the Village of Forkston in Wyoming County and New Milford in Susquehanna County.

Tropical Storm Lee presented an entirely different set of challenges. First, unlike Hurricane Irene, the early predictions called for only minor to moderate flooding. However, by Wednesday September 7 it was now known that heavy flooding was going to impact Central PA giving us less time to react. Again, a 24-hour command center was set up at our corporate office at East Park Drive. We immediately began reaching out to the EMA, PUC, County Officials, Hospitals, Nursing Homes, large businesses and School Districts within our operating areas to keep them apprised of our plans. We kept in continuous contact with these parties throughout the event.

A storage management plan was also enacted in the event our treatment plants were unable to stay in-service. The plan would balance using storage to meet demands as well as to preserve water for fire protection. Also, water buffalos and water tankers were pre-staged to critical care customers, including the State PEMA command center, in the event the water plants would have to be shut down, due to rising waters.

Our Bloomsburg Irondale Water Treatment facility, located on the Fishing Creek, took the brunt of the storm. The creek rose from six feet at 6:00 am on Wednesday, September 7th, to fifteen feet by 2:30 pm the same afternoon. The plant shut down at that point with approximately three feet of water in the plant. The flooding crested at about 7:00 am the next morning at 27 feet, which resulted in over 10 feet of water in the plant. It was not until Saturday morning that crews were able to access the plant to begin restoration. Crews from UW New Jersey and UW Delaware, along with employees from our other PA operations, arrived to assist with the clean-up. Due to their tireless work, the plant was back online on Monday, September 12th and full service was restored to the entire town by Tuesday evening, September 13th. While water service was curtailed during this time, we kept the Bloomsburg Hospital in serviced by hauling water in 24/7 at a cost of \$80,000. We also were able to keep water flowing to the limited staff and students at the University of Bloomsburg, via our storage management plan.

For our Harrisburg operation there was an additional day to prepare as the flooding did not impact facilities until Thursday the 8th. On Wednesday the 7th, employees began moving equipment to higher ground, flood-proofing its facilities and getting adequate chemical deliveries. Flooding levels were constantly being monitored for both the Susquehanna River and the Swatara Creek. These sources of supply provide water to UWPA's water treatment plants that serve its 35,000 plus customers. By early Thursday morning, water began entering the floor of the Sixth Street WTP. At that time, the forecast for the Susquehanna River was for the river to crest at 29 feet by late Friday, which would put over 9 feet of water at the plant. At 3:00 PM, plant operators were operating the plant in chest waders and by 6 PM with over six feet of water in the plant, operators were using a boat to access the plant to keep it in

operation. While the plant continued to operate throughout the entire event, a precautionary boil water notice was issued because of inadequate water quality instrumentation. On Sunday evening, September 8th, the boil water advisory was lifted.

In addition to keeping the Sixth Street Plant in operation, it should be noted that our new Hummelstown water treatment plant never missed a beat, even though the Swatara Creek crested above the 1972 Agnes record level and only a foot of the old plant remained visible when the creek crested.

In conclusion, while I have repeatedly told others that I was and am extremely proud of the professional and tireless work of our employees who sacrificially gave of their time, working around the clock even though they were personally impacted by the flood as well, there are always lessons to learn. We have already met several times both locally and corporately to discuss how we can improve service in times of natural disasters. I am confident that these lessons learned will be very beneficial in the future. However, I just hope it is a long time before we have to implement them.

Thank you for letting me share our story.