

## O&R UNIT TO SPEED PUBLIC SAFETY REPAIRS IN MAJOR STORMS; PART OF LARGER EFFORT STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

PEARL RIVER, NY Oct. 28, 2014 --- Orange and Rockland Utilities (O&R) President and CEO Tim Cawley today detailed the responsibilities of the company's Priority Response Group (PRG), a storm response unit that aims to address community public safety and critical infrastructure emergencies during major storms, and called the group's formation "an important step in working with the communities we serve to return them to normal as soon as possible after a destructive weather event."

Working together with local officials, PRG will clear downed wires first on the major roads designated as a priority by the community. That will help the DPW open those roads sooner. PRG also will restore power first to locations prioritized by local officials as key to maintaining important basic services from health care facilities to pumping stations. That will help the community to continue to operate.

Cawley said, "PRG was created in cooperation with local government, emergency services and public works leaders and is based on lessons learned from the substantial community destruction caused by Superstorm Sandy."

He added, "This unit's success rests on timely cooperation and response. The PRG work will proceed in tandem with that of the local communities. It's driven by local public officials who will tell us what they need from O&R, and where they need it to help get the community back to normal. That work is PRG's mission."

PRG's efforts are part of a broader O&R program to reduce electric and gas damage and outages from major storms, respond to and repair storm damage more quickly and communicate information about those recovery efforts more accurately on a variety of platforms.

### Reduce Outages

O&R plans to spend approximately \$15 million this year to provide additional storm protection at specific strategic electric and gas system locations in an effort to mitigate the impact of severe weather on O&R's energy system.

This marks the second year of a three-year, \$35.5-million construction program designed to make O&R's energy systems more storm resilient. O&R spent approximately \$10 million in 2013 on energy system improvements including building additional electric circuits, undergrounding strategic locations where multiple overhead circuits meet on distribution poles and expanding tree-trimming clearances at critical service locations.

In 2014, O&R plans three projects, totaling \$2.7 million, in Monroe to make the electric system more resilient to storm damage. Those projects, including some undergrounding of overhead electric lines, will improve service to electric customers in **Monroe (town), Highland Mills, Blooming Grove and Kiryas Joel.**

Three storm-hardening projects, including some undergrounding of electric lines, in Tuxedo will enhance electric service reliability to O&R customers in **Tuxedo, Tuxedo Park and the Town of Warwick**. Those projects total \$3.2 million.

Two projects totaling \$450,000 are designed to improve electric service to customers in **West Point, Highland Falls, Port Jervis, Deer Park and Mount Hope**.

In 2013, O&R began five projects, totaling \$1.3 million, in the **Town of Walkill**. These projects ranged from replacing existing wires on Tower Drive to upgrading service on Ingrassia Road to installing underground facilities on Mud Mills Road.

That work comes in addition to nearly \$100 million this year in projects to fortify, improve and maintain the reliability of its electric system. That investment builds on the more than \$750 million O&R has invested over the past 10 years on electric system maintenance and reliability projects

In addition to the new construction program, another important aspect of preventing electric outages is decreasing circuit tree-interference --- the number one cause of outages. That's why O&R has introduced a more aggressive tree-trimming program. Distribution line clearances have been expanded by 33 percent in certain areas, mainly just outside of substations and along higher voltage lines that serve greater numbers of customers.

### **Respond Faster**

Further, as part of this overall plan to improve operational efficiencies and information flow, O&R has launched a new program designed to streamline O&R's field damage assessment procedures, making them faster, more efficient and more accurate.

Under this new program, O&R transmits field damage reports in real time through electronic tablets or laptop computers. This automates and expedites damage assessment information O&R receives from the field, helping O&R identify and address damage more quickly and generate more accurate and timely Estimated Times of Restoration (ETR) for the customer.

Once those damage locations have been confirmed, O&R will receive additional help from a new plan that further supplements O&R's storm fighting resources by deploying a specially trained local laborers' workforce that can react more quickly to support our overall repair and restoration efforts. This plan, designed in cooperation with the Construction Industry Council and Laborers Local 17/754, will help speed electric service restoration during severe weather events by arranging to hire local union members for emergency support work.

### **Communicate Better**

To provide better access to storm information for its customers, O&R is offering a range of texting and other digital communications programs.

O&R uses a variety of digital platforms to stay connected with its customers. O&R is on social media including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and the company's social media is monitored 24/7 during

major storm events. O&R's Mobile App can be downloaded on Android and iOS devices for outage reporting purposes. O&R also has a mobile website that can be accessed through web-enabled mobile devices.

In addition, O&R offers texting options for the exchange of outage information where customers can either text the company to report an outage, or sign up to receive text notifications from O&R on the status of outages that may affect them. And, if customers provide their email addresses, O&R will provide those customers with important news and information via email.

O&R's updated Outage Map offers information from outage locations and their scope to customers affected and estimated time of restoration down to the street level. The new municipal portal feature on the map provides customers context to determine the severity of an outage and progress of restoration by detailing the miles of wire, number of poles and substations in the affected community.

For additional information about these programs, visit O&R's Web site at [www.oru.com](http://www.oru.com).

Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc. (O&R), a wholly owned subsidiary of Consolidated Edison, Inc., one of the nation's largest investor-owned energy companies, is a regulated utility. It provides electric service to approximately 300,000 customers in southeastern New York State (where its franchise name is Orange & Rockland), northern New Jersey (where it's Rockland Electric Company) and northeastern Pennsylvania (where it's Pike County Light & Power Company) and natural gas service to approximately 130,000 customers in New York and Pennsylvania.