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Public Utility Commission of Texas

Memorandum

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Connie Corona, Executive Director

DATE: July 15, 2024

RE: *Project No. 56822, Investigation of Emergency Preparedness and Response by Utilities in Houston and Surrounding Communities*

On July 14, 2024, Governor Abbott directed the Commission to take a comprehensive look at the state of preparation of and immediate response by electric utilities in the Greater Houston area to severe weather events. The governor expressed serious concern about how and why the utilities have been unable to restore electric service to residents in the aftermath of a Category 1 hurricane. The governor's letter is attached below.

Chairman Gleeson and I spoke yesterday about the Commission's responsibilities to the public and the importance of a swift response to the governor's directive. Therefore, today I have opened a new project to investigate the underlying causes of repeated and ongoing power outages in Houston and the surrounding communities. In this project, we will investigate utilities':

- emergency operations plans;
- vegetation management plans;
- infrastructure and storm hardening plans;
- use of mobile generation resources; and
- other activities related to preparation for and response to severe weather.

I am instructing my deputy executive director to work with our Infrastructure, Critical Infrastructure Security and Risk Management, and Enforcement divisions to investigate these issues and generate a report to deliver to the legislature by no later than December 1, 2024.



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

July 14, 2024

Mr. Thomas J. Gleeson
Chairman
Public Utility Commission of Texas
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78711-3326

Dear Chairman Gleeson:

It is unacceptable that millions of Texans in the Greater Houston area have been (or were) left without electricity for multiple days. It is imperative we investigate how and why some Texas utilities were unable to restore power for days following a Category 1 Hurricane.

Texas utilities bear the responsibility of ensuring system resiliency in their respective service territories. While weather-related disasters are outside of human control, their impact to our daily lives can be mitigated or alleviated if proper system planning and pre-storm preparations are made.

Hurricane Beryl made it clear—improvements must be made. I am directing the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) to undertake a rigorous study to determine the causes of the repeated and ongoing power failures in the Greater Houston area after severe weather events. Some questions that must be answered include: Is the cause of the magnitude and duration of customer outages a result of a physical infrastructure or personnel issue? What were the utilities pre-event planning processes? Why exactly were so many Texans left without power for so many days? When and for what purposes did utilities use their mobile generation resources?

These questions and more must be asked and answered by Texas utility companies. We must identify why Hurricane Beryl impacted millions of Texans when there have been many similar events in Texas' recent past that did not, and we must work to prevent any such future impacts.

I am instructing the PUC to deliver a report on its finding by December 1, 2024, to inform the Texas Legislature prior to the 89th Legislative Session. I thank the PUC for its commitment to Texas and look forward reviewing its report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott".

Greg Abbott
Governor