

**CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

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**OCEAN**

405 Route 539  
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(609) 585-7878  
By Appointment



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

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August 13, 2020

The Honorable David Fried  
Mayor  
Township of Robbinsville  
1 Washington Boulevard, Suite 6  
Robbinsville, New Jersey 08691-3162

Dear Mayor Fried,

Attached please find a copy of the letter I sent early Monday morning (August 10) to New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) President Joseph Fiordaliso highlighting specific problems towns across our congressional district experienced after Tropical Storm Isaias. Specifically, I ask the Board to step up oversight of JCP&L's ongoing, deficient response to the extended power outages in our area.

I was pleased to see that just a day later, President Fiordaliso announced that the BPU will open an investigation into JCP&L's actions and seeming inability to prepare for significant weather events.

Please know I am closely monitoring the actions of JCP&L and the BPU in this regard. I will continue to push for accountability--and change. In the interim, please do not hesitate to contact me at 732-780-3035 to share any added insights or recommendations you may have, or if I can be of further assistance in this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress

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August 10, 2020

Mr. Joseph Fiordaliso  
President  
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities  
44 South Clinton Avenue, Floor 7  
Trenton, New Jersey 08609-1241

Dear President Fiordaliso,

I am writing today to bring to your attention numerous complaints which I have received from my constituents regarding the slow response by Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L) to power outages caused by Tropical Storm Isaias.

As you know, this storm hit our state on Tuesday morning, August 4, causing widespread outages. While most agree that it is common to see some loss of power after a severe storm, **I and many of my constituents believe the JCP&L response to this and other outages has been extraordinarily slow and unreasonably burdensome on the rate payers.**

Reports estimate that 1.7 million people went without power after Superstorm Sandy—a destructive multi-day storm that brought loss of life, devastation to property and our economy, and outages that lasted weeks in some cases. Yet, after eight years and one-billion-dollars in infrastructure investments, Tropical Storm Isaias blew through the area in a matter of four or five hours and left a stunning 1.4 million people without power in New Jersey. And nearly five days later, on Sunday morning, August 9th, nearly 27,000 Jersey Central Power & Light customers were still unplugged.

Furthermore, many of my constituents in towns such as Manalapan, Millstone, Colts Neck, Wall Township and Upper Freehold rely on electric-powered well water, meaning that they went without the necessity of fresh water during the scorching heat of summer. While some water and ice were provided for free, the lack of running water in homes and businesses raises additional sanitary concerns.

Some municipalities were hit more severely than others. Towns such as Fair Haven, Roosevelt, and Millstone saw nearly every resident lose power. Sadly, four days later, 90% of Fair Haven residents were still in the dark.

Also frustrating to constituents is JCP&L's lack of communication and failure to provide reasonable estimates for when power will be restored on a micro, town-by-town basis leaving many of its customers uninformed and unprepared.

Some JCP&L customers have been told that they may not have their power fully restored until the "global restoration date" of Tuesday, August 11th at 11:30 pm—more than a week after the initial storm. This excessive length of time is unacceptable and is particularly frustrating in light of the recent billion-dollar infrastructure investment post-Superstorm Sandy.

There may be no way to prevent all outages, but our utilities must constantly strive to be ready for the next storm. Unfortunately, it appears that the response of JCP&L has lagged that of other utilities and has unduly burdened customers, disrupting their daily activities and costing them dearly in lost goods and productivity.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that the Board of Public Utilities step-up its oversight of JCP&L to ensure that the utility has a viable, rapid-response plan that:

- (a) identifies and overcomes ongoing weaknesses in its storm recovery program;
- (b) anticipates and incorporates the sanitary and health needs throughout varying neighborhoods; and
- (c) ultimately demonstrates it will be better prepared to address outages and quickly restore the quality of service which the people of New Jersey both pay for and deserve.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress