

Wednesday, July 28, 2010

Dear District 1 Residents and Friends,

Many of you have contacted me during this power outage crisis. I completely understand your frustration – my family has also been without power and we, like many of you, lose electricity all too often.

Yesterday, my Council colleagues and I were briefed by PEPCO on their response to the storm. They continue to say that this is a 'multi-day event' and that they will have the "vast majority" of residents back on by Thursday. This brief storm was far more damaging than the blizzards - 200,000 customers in our county were without power after Sunday's storm. The National Weather Service is now reporting that gusts of up to 90 mph were recorded.

During the briefing, I made it clear to PEPCO's President Tom Graham that their system simply isn't reliable enough. Power outages occur all too frequently for too long. I informed Mr. Graham that I would be asking the Maryland Public Service Commission, which has total and complete regulatory authority over PEPCO, to open an investigation into PEPCO's reliability, or lack thereof. (You can view the entire briefing by following this link: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cs/templ.asp?url=/content/council/ondemand/index.asp>)

You should know that problems in the system were evident prior to the storm. I [wrote to the President of Pepco on July 12th](#) about the repeated and lengthy power outages that were occurring in fair weather and for no apparent reason. Many constituents had written to me about those outages. This current situation only adds a greater sense of urgency to get to the bottom of this. Pepco is only in the service provider business and does not generate power itself. We should have the very best system that we can and today we do not.

While it may be understandable why there cannot be a human response when thousands of people are calling, it is not acceptable for there to be a recorded message with inaccurate information. There should be a real person answering your questions as to why your power went out, when a crew will be dispatched, and how long it will take. Losing power is a serious matter, and getting a recorded message that lacks timely, accurate information is simply not acceptable. PEPCO has told us that citizens can now call 877-737-2662 to receive real time information on when power will be restored.

[Here is the latest information made available to the County Council:](#)

Outages

- 29,372 Pepco customers remain without power in Montgomery County

- To report power outages, call Pepco at 877-737-2662, Allegheny Power at 800-255-3443, or Baltimore Gas & Electric at 877-778-2222.
- To report "hot" or sparking wires, especially those across roadways, call 911.

Traffic and Road Closures

- 15 traffic signals remain dark, mostly in the Bethesda area. Police officers are directing traffic at these intersections.
- Treat all "dark" intersections as four-way stops. Stop - then proceed cautiously. This is critically important to ensuring vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- 35 County roads remain blocked by fallen trees or downed wires. DOT has cleared all known road closures except those involving Pepco lines. All road closures are pending until Pepco clears the power lines from the obstruction. Pepco has been notified of all road closure locations involving power lines
- To report downed trees in the public right-of-way, call 3-1-1, or, if calling from outside Montgomery County, 240-777-0311.

Transit

- Ride On is operating on a normal schedule. Check www.rideonbus.com for more information.

Recreation Programs/ Pools/Parks:

- All Department of Recreation facilities, including pools, are open, with accompanying programs in those facilities continuing as scheduled.
- Brookside Gardens and the Visitors Center are open. The Conservatory and Wings of Fancy Live Butterfly Exhibit remain closed. Visitors should avoid Glenallan Avenue between the Conservatory Entrance and the Visitors Center Entrance because of a downed tree.
- The following facilities will be open Wednesday: Cabin John Miniature Train, Cabin John Ice Rink, South Germantown Splash Park and Miniature Golf facility, Wheaton Indoor Tennis Center, Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park, the Black Hill Regional Park boat rental facility, Needwood boat rental facility (at Rock Creek Park), Meadowside Nature Center, the Park Permit Office in Silver Spring, Locust Grove Nature Center and Ovid Hazen Wells Carousel at Wheaton Regional Park .
- The following facilities remain closed: Wheaton Ice Rink, Wheaton Miniature Train, and Brookside Nature Center.
- Additional updates will be posted at www.MontgomeryParks.org.

Other County Services:

- Trash and recycling pickups will operate on normal schedules.
- **Little Falls Library** remains closed.
- Montgomery College campuses are open.

Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Presentation:

- The County's Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security presented information yesterday to the Montgomery County Council about the County's response to the severe storm. See the presentation on the County's website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov

Alerts and Updates:

- Alerts and updates are available on the County's Facebook page and through Twitter. Sign up for Alert Montgomery on the County's website at <https://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov> .

Food Safety

- If you are concerned about food safety please consult the guidance provided by the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/keeping_food_Safe_during_an_emergency/index.asp.

Debris Clean Up

- For more information on cleaning up after this storm, please visit <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/swstmpl.asp?url=/content/dep/solidwaste/stormcleanup.asp> for a thorough explanation on what to do with any large debris that may have been generated in your yard.

Again, know that I share your frustration and I will continue to push PEPCO and the Maryland Public Service Commission to take all reasonable steps to increase the reliability of the system and improve the customer response by PEPCO to outages.

Sincerely,

Roger Berliner
District 1