

TOWN OF BELLEAIR

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To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this document and cover letter to serve as the Town of Belleair, Florida's response to the State of Florida Public Service Commission's letter of request: "Re: Utility Hurricane Preparedness and Restoration Comments" per Docket Number 20170215.

If you should have any further comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at (727) 588-3769 x 242 or cdekarz@townofbelleair.net.

Cathy DeKarz
Management Analyst

Vegetation Management

1. What policies or practices can facilitate utility tree trimming and removal of problem trees along public road right of ways or easements?

- We would like to see area risk assessments completed before the storm by energy providers (for us, Duke Energy). This could be done either before hurricane season, or just rotated annually. If the results of these assessments could then be released as public records, we could communicate hazardous trees or branches to our residents and/or staff, who may even take the initiative to trim or remove the problem trees themselves.
- We need consistency in trimming around all utility lines so that power lines, telecommunications lines, etc. can all be coordinated and completed at once.

2. What policies or practices can facilitate utility tree trimming and removal of problem trees outside public road right of ways or easements?

- See the comments above for question 1.

3. Describe how coordination with local utilities could be improved with regard to tree trimming, planting, relocating or removing trees.

- The Town would like proactive communications from our utilities provider about when they are going to be in the area, what work they are planning to complete, and ultimately what work was completed. Currently, we hear from Duke Energy (sometimes) after work is completed in a certain area, but we have no way to anticipate work. If we could do this, residents and/or staff could be notified, which would help get vehicles out of the way and get residents on-board.
- We would like access to an area administrator for our energy provider (Duke Energy). This feature used to exist, and we were happy with having a single point-of-contact for issues and questions. This also allows us to work with someone who has an understanding of our area, and build a more solid relationship between our organization and Duke Energy.

Undergrounding of Electric Facilities

4. What policies or practices could facilitate the undergrounding of existing overhead electric facilities?

- Utilities providers need to play an active role with Town officials for the planning of undergrounding, since we need any and all undergrounding equipment to work with our future uses. When we underground, it won't be solely Duke Energy equipment, so it will have to be compatible and have space for future uses.
- The Town would be interested in fee negotiations and/or negotiations of utility taxes in order to incentivize this process, but this would have to be traded for an expedited timeline/priority for Belleair.

5. What policies or practices could facilitate undergrounding electric facilities in construction of new electric facilities?

- The Town has a current Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) that extends over the next fifteen fiscal years. We would like undergrounding to be a part of this, and for Duke Energy to work with completing these projects side-by-side with us. This would involve sitting down with our staff and public officials to budget and plan for undergrounding appropriately – we need to educate each other.
- We understand that areas are often fed from different sources, and that completing one single section of undergrounding and getting that online immediately is not often possible. In order to counter this, we'd like to see a program that ensures when "x" percent of a service area is set up for undergrounding, Duke will work with the source to complete an undergrounding project.

6. Describe how the process used to interact with utilities on projects to underground electric facilities could be improved.

- Again, the Town would like to see the return of an area administrator (see comment #2 from question #3) that knows our area and our leaders well.
- We would like to recommend that any underground project be completed through the State Revolving Fund, or a similar revenue bond.
- We would also like to see an incentive from FEMA reimbursements and/or the Florida Department of Emergency Management in the form of mitigation funding that helps municipalities and energy providers underground.

Coordination and Communication with Utilities

7. Explain the process to identify and inform electric utilities of local critical facilities and infrastructure, and describe options to improve the process.

- During Hurricane Irma, we noticed that an influx of energy and time was spent on life-safety needs to the detriment to other utilities. Namely, our Water Treatment Plant was listed as a critical facility, but when several of our wells went down, we were back-listed to hospitals and other similar facilities. Who determines what is more critical? It's understandable that hospitals are high on that list, but the Town was never communicated with or checked on by any authority as to our status. We need proactive communications to check on critical facilities and infrastructure.

8. Describe how electric utilities interact with local emergency operations centers during emergencies, and identify opportunities to improve that interaction.

- The presence of Duke Energy at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was extremely useful and we highly recommended continuing that.

9. Describe options to address communications with utilities prior to, during, and after a storm event.

- Again, see our two previous comments about having an area administrator; however, we do understand that emergencies may call for additional, secondary points-of-contact.
- Again, we would really like proactive communications from energy providers. We sat and waited for power to come back to our Town and had no recourse to check on progress or give our residents any information more than what was publicly released for an entire service area. We and our residents would rather honest/real news than no news. Even having access to a monitoring tool would have helped this explain the progress and process to our residents.
- Duke Energy made a promise for 100% power restoration to the entire service area by a certain date and time and they did not meet their very public statement – this is unacceptable. This type of blanket promise is risky and should not have been made, as it angered many area residents who may have been relying on that restoration. Rather, we would recommend an explanation of why power is still out so that residents can be educated and not feel lied to. Sometimes you can't speed up the process, but you can explain what the process is.
- Per comment #1 on question #1 of this submittal, we would like an area risk assessment completed and distributed to the Town prior to a storm or hurricane season that may estimate power impacts resulting from a storm.