



FROM THE DESK OF:



*Chairman*  
**Mike La Rosa**

*In April*, the Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) received petitions from two investor-owned electric utilities—Duke Energy Florida, LLC (DEF) and Tampa Electric Company (TECO)—for base rate increases. This begins the Commission's eight-month timeline to fully process each utility's petition, including discovery, depositions, and an evidentiary technical hearing to gather the necessary information to determine just and reasonable rates for customers over the next several years.

For FPSC Commissioners, an important part of the rate case process is hearing from DEF and TECO customers about their utility's request and its quality of service. One of my priorities is to reach Florida customers and help them participate in the Commission's regulatory process in a meaningful way. DEF and TECO customers were able to participate by offering comments—or testimony—before all five Commissioners at either an in-person or a virtual customer service hearing in June. Spanish interpreters were present at most hearings to help customers get their testimony on the record.

In-person customer service hearings were held in the utility's service territory for customer convenience. Customers could participate by phone at the virtual customer service hearings held in Tallahassee. For the first time, the FPSC offered hybrid (both in-person and virtual) customer service hearings for DEF customers, since parts of its service territory surround Tallahassee, where the virtual hearings were held. All customer service hearings are available to view on the Commission's website, [www.FloridaPSC.com](http://www.FloridaPSC.com).

Customers who could not attend a hearing still have an opportunity to provide testimony. Written comments can be submitted by emailing the FPSC's Office of Commission Clerk at [clerk@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:clerk@psc.state.fl.us) or by completing a Comment Card available at the DEF (docket number 20240025) and TECO (docket number 20240026) rate case links found under Hot Topics on the FPSC's website, [www.FloridaPSC.com](http://www.FloridaPSC.com).

## Florida PSC Encourages Preparedness and Readiness for 2024 Hurricane Season

Hurricane season began on June 1 and ends on November 30. With a more active than normal season predicted, the Commission ensures the state's investor-owned electric utilities are prepared for the 2024 storm season.

On Tuesday, May 21, Florida utilities reviewed updates to their storm response and recovery procedures at the FPSC's annual Hurricane Preparedness Workshop. Each review included the current status on FPSC-mandated storm preparedness initiatives:

- ◆ Facility inspections, maintenance, and repairs;
- ◆ Vegetation management;
- ◆ Flooding and storm surge mitigation;
- ◆ Wooden pole inspections; and
- ◆ Coordination with other utilities, government, and community groups.

The PSC's storm preparedness rules help Florida's electric utilities continually improve their storm readiness, but customers also need to be prepared. To assist customers, the Commission has posted Customer Storm Preparation and Recovery Information under Hot Topics on our website, including storm planning and recovery tips.

Planning tools include the FPSC's "Hurricane House," with 19 preparation tips for home and family, from planning an evacuation route to dealing with downed power lines. After our own experience with tornados, our staff added a home electric connection graphic, showing who—the utility or the customer—is responsible for repairs, as well as utility storm hardening reports.

Workshop presentations are available under Hot Topics on the FPSC website. Following each named storm that impacts our state, the FPSC aggregates the available power outage data and posts it on the FPSC website.

## CONSUMER EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Each May, the Commission joins in the nationwide Older Americans Month (OAM) celebration. Established to recognize older Americans' contributions to their communities, OAM is an opportunity for the FPSC to honor seniors and support their active, independent lifestyles.

This year's OAM theme was *Powered by Connection*. The FPSC connects with seniors every month through in-person visits to local senior and community centers statewide. Our visits help empower seniors by offering assistance on a range of utility-related issues, from understanding utility usage and billing to providing tips on how to spot and avoid scams targeting utility customers.

FPSC representatives visited senior and community centers in Orange, Brevard, and Hillsborough Counties during OAM to talk with visitors about energy and water conservation to lower utility bills and the Lifeline Assistance program to receive discounted phone/broadband service. Older residents in Duval County also received FPSC assistance during the Jacksonville Senior Expo.

If you're interested in the FPSC visiting a senior center near you, call the **FPSC's Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach at 850-413-6482**. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, OAM information can be found [here](#).

## Commission Initiatives

One of the Chairman's priorities is to reach the next generation to bring and build career awareness. **Take Your Child to Work Day**, held nationally on the fourth Thursday in April, provided a perfect opportunity to help the children of FPSC employees better understand their parents' work and generate interest to follow in their career path. The Chairman held a mock hearing, allowing participants to act the parts of Chairman, intervenor, and FPSC staff. In addition to being a lot of fun, the children learned the value of the Commission's hearing process and their parents' contributions to its success.

## Coffee Talks!

Chairman La Rosa learned a lot from FPSC staff at his monthly *Coffee Talks!* visit. In April, he met with the Office of Industry Development & Market Analysis, whose staff includes some with the least and the most FPSC tenure, generating stories on the Commission's past, present, and future. The Division of Engineering received a visit from the Chairman's Office in May. Discussions centered on the aftermath of two tornadoes that hit Tallahassee on May 10, and the challenges of teenagers learning to drive. This month, the Chairman met staff in the Office of the Commission Clerk, who has been very busy with an unprecedented number of digital filings and records management tasks from the multiple hearing-track dockets this year.

The Internal Affairs meeting *Song of the Day* was *Walk on Water* by Eddie Money in April, and *Riders on the Storm* by the Doors in May (very appropriate, since the Hurricane Preparedness Workshop immediately followed IA).

## Chairman La Rosa Participates in National Meetings

The **Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI)** hosted a tour of its research facility in Charlotte, North Carolina in May. Chairman La Rosa joined colleagues from seven state Commissions to learn about state-of-the-art research and development on electric generation, distribution, and transmission. EPRI also shared information on its cyber, digital, and instrumentation lab, including an experimental waterless solar panel cleaning system developed by a student-led team!

One of the most interesting areas of research is the use of advanced conductors in transmission lines. "We see transmission lines every day," Chairman La Rosa said, "but don't always hear about the upgrades that are being made to improve their performance. It was exciting to see how this technology might be used in Florida." Advanced conductors, like carbon conductors, can improve grid efficiency, increase current carrying capacity, improve reliability, and add to the resilience of transmission lines. "This research is important for Florida's grid, as building a new transmission line is often very difficult, and upgrading existing transmission lines can be a viable option."

Chairman La Rosa attended the **Southeastern Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (SEARUC) Annual Meeting** in June. Topics ranged from navigating load growth, resiliency, and affordability to preparing for the new PFAS water rules to what's next for new nuclear. With the membership of eleven southeastern states and Puerto Rico, Commissions concentrate on information that best fits this geographic and demographic area. Also at the SEARUC meeting, Chairman La Rosa along with his fellow Commissioners, recommended Commissioner Gabriella Passidomo to represent Florida on the Executive Committee, bringing the annual SEARUC meeting to Florida in 2027.

On the Home front, Chairman La Rosa toured **Lakeland Electric's plant facilities** in May. Lakeland Electric is the third largest publicly owned utility in Florida and recently assisted the City of Tallahassee in its restoration efforts after two tornadoes struck on May 10. The visit to Lakeland included two main areas of focus, a tour of their new 120 MW Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE) plant on a brownfield site and a roundtable with local leaders on physical and cyber security measures at the utility.

Chairman La Rosa toured the inside of the new natural gas generation facility which replaced a retired coal plant and learned about the quick-start capabilities that make this plant perfect for meeting customer-demand at times solar-generation is not available. Plant engineers and operators walked through the process of redesigning, permitting, and the decision-making that went into determining why the RICE generators were a best fit for Lakeland Electric.

The second portion of the day was spent with Lakeland Executives, including the head of physical infrastructure security, and Florida House Representatives Jennifer Canady, Josie Tomkow and Brad Yaeger. This past legislative session Representative Canady, a Lakeland native, sponsored a bill that provided criminal penalties and liability for causing damage to critical infrastructure. Chairman La Rosa was able to hear firsthand from the legislators the priority they are placing on creating a secure and reliable Florida Grid. In turn, Chairman La Rosa provided insight into the Commission's upcoming assessment of the security and resiliency of the state's electric grid and natural gas facilities against both physical and cyber threats. Given that the Commission is an arm of the Legislative branch, it is important to Chairman La Rosa that the FPSC continues to offer expert consultation to provide an understanding on Florida's unique energy landscape.

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will be published online quarterly. Look [here](#) for past issues.