



TRANSMISSION RELIABILITY

## Florida Commission Reports Finds That Utility Storm Hardening Works

*The report's key findings show the length of utility power outages was reduced from the 2004-2005 storm season*

Aug 21, 2018

The Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) last month issued its report on electric utilities' hurricane preparedness and restoration actions and found that, overall, the length of power outages was reduced, indicating that storm hardening practices work. In 2006, the PSC ordered electric utilities to implement extensive activities to improve system resilience. That was followed by 10 years without a major storm landfall in Florida, making the 2016 and 2017 hurricane seasons the first opportunity to gather performance data.

“For more than a decade, the PSC has worked to strengthen the state’s electric infrastructure, while keeping costs down for customers,” said PSC Chairman Art Graham. “This report confirms that our storm hardening rules are working and also identifies areas that can be improved, such as utilities’ undergrounding programs, customer communications, and tree-trimming coordination with local governments.

“It’s a real hardship to be without power, so it’s natural to be frustrated when it happens. We shouldn’t let that keep us from seeing the progress that’s been made – utilities achieved much shorter outage times than in the past, even though Irma was a huge storm,” Chairman Graham added.

The report’s key findings show the length of utility power outages was reduced from the 2004-2005 storm season, hardened distribution facilities performed better than non-hardened facilities, and power outages primarily resulted from falling trees, vegetation, and debris from outside the utilities’ rights of way.

On July 10, 2018, the PSC finalized the report’s key findings and directed its staff to:

- Open storm hardening plan review dockets earlier than previously scheduled for Florida’s five investor-owned utilities (IOUs), specifically collecting more details on alternatives considered b
- Before selecting a particular storm hardening project, utilities’ interactions with local governments about vegetation management and identification of critical facilities, among other data. Begin collecting data related to the targeted undergrounding projects of Florida Power & Light Company and Duke Energy Florida, LLC as part of the PSC’s annual distribution reliability review.

- Initiate two PSC staff management audits: (1) how the IOUs estimate and communicate outage restoration times to their customers and (2) how the IOUs inspect and maintain their transmission structures.

The Commission also identified several issues the Legislature might want to consider, including a statewide public education program on tree trimming and possible legislation to require inspection and hardening of non-electric utility poles.

Access the Review of Florida's Electric Utility Hurricane Preparedness and Restoration Actions 2018 [here](https://www.tdworld.com/transmission-reliability/florida-commission-reports-finds-utility-storm-hardening-works).

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