

STATE OF MICHIGAN
BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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In the matter, on the Commission's own motion,	)	
to open a docket that will be used to	)	
collaboratively consider issues related to the	)	
reliability and resilience of the electric power	)	Case No. U-21388
system in Michigan in a Commission-sponsored	)	
technical conference.	)	
_____	)	

At the June 12, 2025 meeting of the Michigan Public Service Commission in Lansing,
Michigan.

PRESENT: Hon. Daniel C. Scripps, Chair
Hon. Katherine L. Peretick, Commissioner
Hon. Alessandra R. Carreon, Commissioner

ORDER

Beginning on March 28, 2025, and lasting through March 30, 2025, northern Michigan experienced extreme winter weather that resulted in dangerous ice accumulation. This ice accumulation caused widespread power outages and had significant impacts on critical services throughout the region, which included the loss of backup generators, the loss of phone and cellular services, and impassable roads, as well as widespread damage to homes and businesses. Utilities, cooperatives, and transmission companies experienced damage to electrical infrastructure. Restoration efforts proved difficult with areas having between 0.25-1.00" of accumulated ice, and with continued freezing temperatures preventing any significant melting of the accumulated ice for several additional days. Diesel fuel supply for the affected region became an issue as a northern

Michigan petroleum terminal was without power and the Mackinac Bridge Authority closed the bridge due to falling ice concerns.

On March 31, 2025, Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued Executive Order (EO) 2025-2 declaring a state of emergency for the counties of Otsego, Oscoda, Montmorency, Presque Isle, Emmet, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Mackinac, and Alpena. On April 1, 2025, the state of emergency was expanded to include Alcona and Antrim counties through EO 2025-3. *See also*, EO 2025-4 and EO 2025-5. On April 24, 2025, the Commission issued an order in Case No. U-21916 authorizing the release of relevant information to the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division—the agency coordinating the state efforts in response to the emergency. On May 16, 2025, Governor Whitmer submitted a request to the federal government for a disaster declaration for northern Michigan as a result of the ice storms. As part of its continuing effort to address resilience issues, on May 21, 2025, the Commission held a public forum in Gaylord, Michigan, in order to review the response to the catastrophic ice storm and to take input from utility customers who were affected by the storm.

The Commission has been focused on the issue of resilience for several years. On April 13, 2023, the Commission issued an order in this docket (April 13 order) acknowledging the series of storms that began on February 22, 2023, in the lower peninsula, resulting in electric power outages for approximately one million customers, collectively, of Consumers Energy Company (Consumers) and DTE Electric Company (DTE Electric) and also the loss of life.¹ The April 13 order further detailed the Commission’s wide-ranging, continuing efforts “to improve the reliability of the state’s power grid to make it more resilient against the increasingly frequent and

¹ *See*, <https://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/consumer/electricity/customer-outage-history> (accessed May 19, 2025) for specific customer outage history details for 2019-present.

severe storms that are associated with climate change” and announced that the Commission Staff (Staff) would convene two Commission-sponsored technical conferences to collaboratively address issues around resilience and reliability for May 22 and 26, 2023. April 13 order, pp. 2-6.

On May 22 and 26, 2023, the technical conference sessions took place virtually via Microsoft Teams, where panel discussions and recommendations were presented by the Staff, local government officials, industry leaders, national experts, consumer advocates, and other interested persons. *See*, Case No. U-21388, filings #U-21388-0004, -0005. The technical conference focused on several important topics, including extreme weather, the definition of resilience, the need for coordination between government and industry sectors, and the opportunity to use data to prioritize restoration efforts. Since the date of the technical conference, several related discussions have taken place between the Staff and utilities, and additional Commission directives have been issued, as described below.

On December 21, 2023, the Commission issued an order in this case (December 21 order) providing a comprehensive description of the Commission’s recent efforts in regards to reliability and resilience, and providing additional directives. The Commission noted the ongoing work on the utility reliability reporting template (Case No. U-21122), the launch of the third-party utility audit (Case No. U-21305), and the launch of the Financial Incentives and Disincentives workgroup (Case No. U-21400), as well as the 2019 comprehensive Statewide Energy Assessment (SEA) (Case No. U-20464). December 21 order, pp. 3-4. The Commission acknowledged the filing of distribution investment and maintenance plans (distribution plans) (Case Nos. U-20147, U-21045, U-21097, and U-21286) and the public comment process that attends these filings. The Commission also noted the 2019 launch of the MI Power Grid initiative, which resulted in the creation of several workgroups, including workgroups on optimizing grid investments and

performance, exploring opportunities to use financial mechanisms to improve reliability and resilience, and improving distribution system data access.² *See*, October 17, 2019 order in Case No. U-20645; December 21 order, pp. 4-5.

Additionally, the Commission noted its actions to expand tree trimming funding for utilities on a faster cycle to boost system reliability, with required reporting, and its finding that customer interruptions on enhanced tree trim circuits have been significantly reduced. *Id.*, p. 5; *see*, May 2, 2019 order in Case No. U-20162; May 8, 2020 order in Case No. U-20561; December 17, 2020 order in Case No. U-20697; November 4, 2021 order in Case No. U-21128; December 22, 2021 order in Case No. U-20963; November 18, 2022 order in Case No. U-20836; and December 1, 2023 order in Case No. U-21297.³

Additional Commission activities during this timeframe have included storm response investigations and utility data collection efforts. *See*, Case Nos. U-20169, U-21122, U-21305, and U-21388. The Commission has also created a dedicated distribution planning section within the Commission; outage credits have increased from \$25 to \$40 per qualifying outage for eligible customers, plus \$40 per each additional day (Case No. U-20629); and the Commission has also strengthened its technical standards through the formal rulemaking process. Monitoring utility pursuit of federal funding for resiliency and affordability is also part of this ongoing work (Case No. U-21227). December 21 order, p. 5.

Based on information gleaned from the technical conferences and these efforts, the Commission directed additional work in the areas of: (1) communication and coordination,

² *See also*, <https://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/commission/workgroups/mi-power-grid> (accessed May 19, 2025).

³ *See*, e.g., Case No. U-20162, filing #U-20162-0665; and Case No. U-20697, filing #U-20697-0570.

(2) community involvement, and (3) data accessibility and effectiveness. *Id.*, pp. 7-8. Thus, the Commission directed DTE Electric and Consumers to convene one or more meetings with a representative sample of local government officials and emergency response teams within their respective service territories not later than March 31, 2024, for the purpose of improving communication protocols between utilities and local governments during outages and extreme weather events, and to report back to the Staff on the learnings and next steps stemming from these meetings not later than April 30, 2024. December 21 order, p. 8. Noting the importance of accurate information for customers during outage events, the Commission also directed DTE Electric and Consumers to file in this docket, not later July 1, 2024, a detailed description of their customer communication protocols, strategies, and timelines utilized during outage events. *Id.*, pp. 8-9. The Commission also directed DTE Electric and Consumers to develop internal processes to better use available advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) data to confirm when a customer's service is, in fact, restored and to coordinate with the Staff on ways to use AMI data for more accurate outage maps with more precise restoration times, while balancing cost considerations. DTE Electric and Consumers were directed to include a description of the initial steps taken to comply with this directive as part of the report on customer communication protocols to be filed in this docket not later than July 1, 2024. *Id.*, pp. 9-10. The Commission invited comment on these issues, to be filed no later than July 31, 2024. On July 1, 2024, DTE Electric and Consumers each filed a report on customer communication protocols and AMI utilization in this docket. No comments were filed in response to the reports.

Finally, the Commission found that there is a need to better understand how utilities are identifying and prioritizing critical customers and to increase options and resources for identified critical facilities (e.g., schools, hospitals, nursing homes, community centers, etc.) to address

outages. *Id.*, pp. 10-11. To address this need, the Commission directed the Staff to review the Commission's service quality rules and technical standards and the resilience requirements of critical facilities in terms of their ability to operate in the event of a distribution outage, and to file a straw proposal in this docket not later than December 2, 2024, to better align the Commission's service quality rules and technical standards with the industry requirements for resilience of specific critical facilities. *Id.*, p. 11.

On December 2, 2024, the Staff filed its Straw Proposal on Critical Facility Resilience (Straw Proposal). The Straw Proposal contains the Staff's recommendations on how to improve the resilience of critical and priority facilities through rule changes, specifically to the Service Quality and Reliability Standards for Electric Distribution Systems, Mich Admin Code, R 460.701-460.752. Straw Proposal, pp. 9-14. The Straw Proposal also describes the Staff's outreach to utilities and the information acquired through that process, as well as outreach to critical facility regulatory staff and other state agencies involved with critical and priority facilities. *Id.*, pp. 16-20. Finally, the Staff makes recommendations for further action. *Id.*, pp. 20-24.

The Commission notes its appreciation for the Staff's work in developing the Straw Proposal and finds that there should be an opportunity for interested persons to comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the Straw Proposal. Thus, any interested person may file initial comments on the Straw Proposal no later than 5:00 p.m. (Eastern time (ET)) on July 30, 2025.⁴ Reply comments may be filed no later than 5:00 p.m. (ET) on August 29, 2025. Written and electronic comments must be paginated and must reference Case No. U-21388. Written comments should be mailed to: Executive Secretary, Michigan Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 30221,

⁴ The Commission notes that the Michigan Municipal Association for Utility Issues already submitted comments on the Straw Proposal on March 10, 2025.

Lansing, MI 48909. Comments submitted in electronic format may be filed via the Commission's E-Docket website, or for those persons without an E-dockets account, via e-mail to mpscedockets@michigan.gov. Any person requiring assistance prior to filing may contact the Staff at (517) 284-8090 or by e-mail at mpscedockets@michigan.gov. All comments submitted to the Commission in this matter will be filed in Case No. U-21388 and will become public information available on the Commission's website and subject to disclosure.

Turning to more recent events, as mentioned above, on May 21, 2025, the Commission held a public forum in Gaylord to review the response to the catastrophic ice storm and take input from utility customers impacted by the ice storm. The Commissioners and the Staff heard directly from utility customers about the ice storm and the response to it by utilities, local and state authorities, and others. During the public forum held in Gaylord, moving the electric distribution system underground emerged as a key theme proposed by those present for improving electric distribution system performance during catastrophic storms. The Commission notes that the Staff investigated expanding underground electric distribution facilities previously in Case No. U-15279 and issued a report in that docket dated November 21, 2007, with findings indicating that the benefits of undergrounding did not compare favorably to the costs. However, since 2007, the instances of extreme weather have increased, and the costs, benefits, and performance of utility infrastructure have also changed. Michigan utilities have also conducted undergrounding pilots and the Staff has continued to examine undergrounding data.

Thus, the Commission finds that a technical workshop discussing the costs and benefits of undergrounding is warranted. The Staff is directed to plan and conduct a technical workshop on undergrounding and alternatives to undergrounding for reliability and resilience improvement, which includes the latest learnings from existing undergrounding pilots, no later than September

30, 2025. The Staff is further directed to provide a report to the Commission with recommended next steps for the Commission's consideration, to be filed in this docket no later than October 31, 2025.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

A. Any interested person may file initial comments on the Straw Proposal on Critical Facility Resilience no later than 5:00 p.m. (Eastern time) on July 30, 2025. Reply comments may be filed no later than 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on August 29, 2025. Comments must be paginated and must refer to Case No. U-21388.

B. The Commission Staff shall conduct a technical workshop on undergrounding and alternatives to undergrounding for reliability and resilience improvement, which includes the latest learnings from existing undergrounding pilots, no later than September 30, 2025. Thereafter, the Commission Staff shall file a report in this docket with recommended next steps addressing undergrounding and alternatives to undergrounding for the Commission's consideration no later than October 31, 2025.

The Commission reserves jurisdiction and may issue further orders as necessary.

MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Daniel C. Scripps, Chair

Katherine L. Peretick, Commissioner

Alessandra R. Carreon, Commissioner

By its action of June 12, 2025.

Lisa Felice, Executive Secretary

PROOF OF SERVICE

STATE OF MICHIGAN)

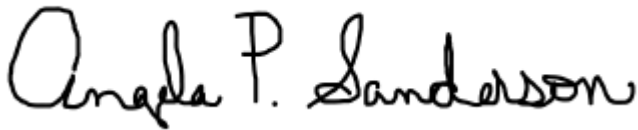
Case No. U-21388

County of Ingham)

Brianna Brown being duly sworn, deposes and says that on June 12, 2025 A.D. she electronically notified the attached list of this **Commission Order via e-mail transmission**, to the persons as shown on the attached service list (Listserv Distribution List).


Brianna Brown

Subscribed and sworn to before me
this 12th day of June 2025.



Angela P. Sanderson
Notary Public, Shiawassee County, Michigan
As acting in Eaton County
My Commission Expires: May 21, 2030

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