



VILLAGE OF SCARSDALE

Open Letter to Scarsdale Community *Tropical Storm Isaias Power Outage Update*

Dear Scarsdale community,

It is with great displeasure that I write to you today without a firm power restoration target for Scarsdale residents and businesses suffering from power outages in connection with Tropical Storm Isaias' arrival on Tuesday afternoon. However, with respect to this critical question, I can relate that the ConEd Outage Map presently lists Monday, August 10, at 11:00 PM as the restoration target for the entirety of Westchester County, though ConEd has related to the Village that they intend to have a significant majority of Scarsdale residents restored by Sunday, if not sooner. I am hopeful that information is accurate; however, some residents are now reporting having received an automated call from ConEd indicating a Tuesday restoration target.

The Village continues to work with ConEd leadership and our County and State elected officials to secure more resources in support of electric service restoration community-wide.

It is noteworthy, but sufficiently explanatory, that ConEd reports the damage in connection with Tropical Storm Isaias ranks second in their history, with only Superstorm Sandy having been worse. To that point Governor Cuomo declared a [State of Emergency](#) and issued a [Disaster Declaration](#) covering Westchester and other counties.

Yes, ConEd did need to prioritize critical infrastructure, including such uses as nursing homes, hospitals, and public safety facilities. Locally, our Pool Complex remains without power at this time and the Pool Complex will be closed Saturday and possibly Sunday, as well. Additionally, Boniface Water Tower, our main public water supply, experienced an extended outage and had to run on generator back-up. Finally, the Public Safety Building lost an important communications line, but was able to use back-up service until the line was restored. Scarsdale PD received over 1,200 requests for service by phone on Tuesday, alone. Indeed, critical infrastructure had to be placed back in service as soon as possible.

Yes, major roadways needed to be prioritized and cleared, as they not only carry heavy traffic volumes, but such closures can create dangerous traffic in residential neighborhoods as large numbers of drivers navigate their way through the community.

In short, the challenges have been significant and the scope of the problem extensive, requiring ConEd to prioritize their efforts. There will be time to evaluate what worked and what didn't, and that effort is already underway, including within the regulatory framework establishing and overseeing ConEd's roles and responsibilities.

At this time, the Village remains sharply focused on clearing remaining roads closed due to downed trees and wires and expediting, to the extent feasible, restoration of electric service to all Scarsdale properties.

Below, I relate some ConEd response metrics, briefly discuss ConEd's projected field personnel through the weekend, and provide a synopsis of Village efforts to prepare in advance for Tropical Storm Isaias' arrival.

First, I will share some metrics quantifying ConEd's progress to-date.

ConEd Response Metrics

Outages

In the immediate wake of the storm, 51.4% (3,200) of ConEd's Scarsdale customers were without power. As of this writing, that number has been reduced to 1,284 remaining without power, though the number fluctuates as roadway clearing and restoration activities continue.

One should note that power restoration cannot occur until after a "Cut and Clear" crew has cleared downed trees and wires, de-energizing them in the process. A different team, a "Line Crew" can follow behind to restore service. They are separate crews with different training, so please expect to see a Cut and Clear crew leave after having completed their work, yet the power remains off – this does not mean ConEd has abandoned your location, but rather the next crew will be the one to restore the power, though a lag typically occurs.

Road Closures

Initially, Scarsdale activated 54 road closures in connection with downed trees and/or wires. As of today, 15 remained. The road closures included high volume roadways, such as Mamaroneck, Heathcote, and Weaver. Weaver, for example, could not be cleared until yesterday. In addition to the stress of an extended power outage, members of the West Quaker Ridge neighborhood were being inundated with heavy traffic volume prior to Weaver being cleared.

Traffic Lights

Seven traffic lights lost power during the storm, necessitating either generator back-up or stop sign deployment, depending on traffic volume. As of this writing, three are regulated by stop signs and four are operating on back-up generators. Power has not been restored to any of them at this stage.

Importantly, New York State law requires a driver to come to a complete stop at any non-functioning traffic signal. Our temporary stop signs serve as a reminder, but it is the driver's duty to stop, regardless of the potential absence of a stop sign; Scarsdale residents may encounter such conditions when traveling beyond our municipal boundaries. Also note, however, that many drivers are not aware of their legal obligation to stop, so be careful in navigating intersections where a traffic light is not functioning.

ConEd Initial Crew Strength

Having anticipated a pass farther to the west, ConEd's resources were outstripped when Tropical Storm Isaias drifted east, causing extensive damage in Westchester County and surrounding areas.

At 260 personnel to respond County-wide, ConEd was not adequately staffed to handle a storm of this magnitude in a manner consistent with the needs and expectations of Westchester County residents, or any other County's residents for that matter. As a mitigating factor in considering ConEd's state of preparedness, however, it should be noted that the general progression of tropical disturbances, working their way up the east coast from south to north, reduces the availability of mutual aid resources once the extent of damage is known locally. This issue arises because mutual aid is requested and dispatched to states south of New York before New York communities can accurately predict the magnitude of impact. Thus, certain mutual aid resources do not become available until after they complete their service to the southern states that requested it first.

As the following sections relate, ConEd expects additional mutual aid resources arriving today and through the weekend, arriving from a number of states, including places like Florida and Virginia, where their storm recovery missions and obligations have been fulfilled.

Projected ConEd Resources and Restoration Goals

Heading into this weekend, ConEd has increased its field personnel count from 260 to 400. An additional 475 are arriving between tomorrow and Sunday, with a majority of the new personnel ready to perform field activities in support of power restoration on Sunday. The new field personnel are arriving from states as far away as Texas, Florida, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

ConEd reports that the greatest increase in local service restorations will coincide with the Sunday surge in out-of-state mutual aid support.

Village of Scarsdale Advance Preparation Activities

As news became available indicating that Tropical Storm Isaias may strike our area, the Westchester County Emergency Operating Center began to issue municipal updates.

Accordingly, our preparations began the week prior to Isaias' arrival on Tuesday. Among others, the following steps were taken:

- We contacted our ConEd Municipal Liaison to confirm contact information, establish communication protocols, and confirm our understanding of the level of support he would be able to provide. Some of our peer communities did not plan similarly and were unable to make contact with their designated liaison immediately after the storm.
- All departments prepared for an "all hands on deck" emergency activation, providing our staff with advance notice of the need to be available should Tropical Storm Isaias impact Scarsdale.

- Department of Public Works personnel prepped all trucks and heavy equipment, making sure they were task-ready and available to deploy without delay to support emergency needs.
- Recognizing the forecast included rain totals potentially reaching four inches over three hours, our Department of Public Works proactively began clearing catch basins and lowering water course levels to reduce the likelihood of basement and overland flooding. Fortunately, rain totals did not hit the mid- or high-end estimates included in the forecasts.
- Police, Fire, and EMS personnel similarly made advance preparations relative to storm response personnel and equipment, including advance deployment of stop signs, checking proper equipment operation to assist with any basement flooding, activating volunteer firefighters, staging ambulances at Village Fire and DPW facilities, and more.

Summary

Our Village staff have worked tirelessly to prepare for and respond to the impacts of Tropical Storm Isaias.

Although ConEd has demonstrated significant progress in mitigating the worst of the damage Westchester County experienced, there remains substantial work ahead. At present, ConEd has more than 400 of their field employees working to restore power as safely and quickly as possible and they're getting help this weekend from 475 additional mutual aid and contractor workers from as far away as Texas, Florida, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

Of course, we all wish they had more crews immediately deployed, especially here in Scarsdale. Further, it really does seem unreasonable that in 2020 a near suburb of the largest city in the United States would experience repeated power outages extending into days, if not longer. These frustrations are shared by most Westchester County residents, amplified by each hour that the outage continues.

The Village is committed to making it clear to NYS and Westchester County officials that future storm responses must be more proactive with more timely clearing of downed trees and wires, followed by prompt restoration work. I have already been in contact with State and County officials in this regard, having found they share my perspective. I assure you, we will work with our State and County Officials to effect lasting change in the manner in which ConEd prepares for known weather hazards and the speed with which restoration activities are completed.

Finally, please continue to demonstrate patience with Village staff as they endeavor to expedite restoration.

Sincerely,



Mayor Marc Samwick