PORTLAND BUREAU OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

An Equal Opportunity Employer

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Utility Outage Reporting – Frequently Asked Questions

Q1 – What is the purpose of this policy?

The purpose of this policy is to better prepare for a citywide emergency. By centralizing outage information in one location, the public will no longer have to separately gather information from their gas company, telephone company, electric company, etc. to learn outage information. Additionally, because outages have the potential to seriously impact critical systems that are vital to the public's health, safety and security, it is in the public's best interest to have real-time information on restoration efforts.

Q2 – Does the City have the authority to legislate network outage reporting?

The City of Portland's home rule charter provides broad legislative authority to the City Council to protect the public health, safety and welfare. The Oregon courts have construed the language of the City's charter as giving the City Council legislative authority co-extensive with the State Legislature.

Q3 – What if all cities in our service area adopted a similar policy? Wouldn't it make more sense for this to come from the PUC to at least standardize a policy statewide?

The City of Portland would welcome a consistent approach statewide to providing utility customers with accurate, up to date information on outages. To date, the reporting requirements established at the State and national levels serve the purpose of informing the regulatory agencies about outages. This is a different focus than informing customers about outages.

Q4 – Does the policy apply to broadband?

No, the definition of utility does not apply to businesses supplying broadband internet services.

The City of Portland will make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. Please notify us no less than five (5) business days prior to the event by phone at 503-823-4375, by the City's TTY at 503-823-6868, or by the Oregon Relay Service at 1-800-735-2900.

Q5 – What about unintended nefarious uses of the outage information?

The policy does not require outage information to be reported at the account-level. Consistent with current practices on PublicAlerts.org, outage information will be reported on an aggregate basis– either by zip code or some other mutually agreed upon criteria.

Q6 – Isn't this policy duplicative of existing FCC regulations?

No. Current FCC rules presume existing outage reports are confidential and prevent disclosure to the public. They are also not contemporaneous. An FCC-approved basic notification must be submitted within two hours, however; the initial communication report isn't due for up to 72 hours. The focus of the FCC's regulations is on informing the federal agency of outages, not on providing information to customers on the extent of outage issues and when service may be restored.

Q7 – Will there be any flexibility in service outage reporting timelines or other considerations?

Under proposed City Code language, the PBEM Director will be given administrative authority to customize service disruption notification agreements for each respective utility so as not to negatively impact business operations. In addition, utilities participating in voluntary compliance would not be subject to the penalty provisions of the Chapter.