



User-Friendly News Releases



Craft Press Releases (and all PR Content) From the Journalist's POV

Presented by: Myra Oppel, APR
Regional Communications Vice President
December 12, 2013

#prconf

When and Where to Deliver News Releases

- Timing matters
 - The time of day can determine if your story will fit into reporters' news cycles
 - The day of the week can determine if reporters even see your release
 - Where your release falls in the coverage cycle of an issue is relevant. Sending a release on a hot topic may give a reporter a new angle.
 - Other stories also can overshadow your release. Don't try to compete with huge breaking news or steal your own thunder by issuing overlapping releases.

Sometimes you send news releases because you have a story you're hoping reporters will pick up. Other times, you're obligated to issue a news release but are really hoping nobody notices.

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For Immediate Release | Friday, April 6, 2012

701 Ninth St., NW
Washington, DC 20068
pepco.com
NYSE: POM

PEPCO REVIEWS BLUE RIBBON PANELS' RECOMMENDATIONS

Reliability initiatives already showing results

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 6, 2012) – Pepco thanks the District of Columbia and Prince George's County Blue Ribbon panels for their invaluable work in helping the company improve its customer communications and overall reliability.

Pepco requested the formation of the independent panels in March 2011 to solicit customer feedback regarding service reliability and communications with customers.

ing our efforts to make improvements in these it.

For Immediate Release | Monday, September 30, 2013

701 Ninth St., NW
Washington, DC 20068
pepco.com
NYSE: POM

Pepco Helps Customers Plan for Potential Government Shutdown *Resources Available for Customers Struggling to Pay Bills*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Pepco wants to reassure customers who might be affected by a threatened federal government shutdown Oct. 1 and are worrying about how they would manage their personal finances.

"We have a wide range of payment options that we offer customers and also offer to work individually with them on ways to manage their electric bills," said Donna Cooper, president, Pepco Region. "We want them to know they can always call us for help, and we routinely help customers who have trouble paying their bills. For those who for the first time might find themselves unable to pay their full balances each month, we want them to know how to reach out to us."

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When and Where to Deliver News Releases

- Know and meet reporter deadlines
 - Print reporters have traditional press deadlines of late afternoon for full stories but also want to file something online immediately
 - Broadcast reporters need time to put together packages for shows but also have to compete with written stories online
 - Online publications want everything immediately

Reporters have dual demands of traditional deadlines but also the need for immediate Web publication.

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For Immediate Release | **Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2013 1 p.m.**

701 Ninth St., NW
Washington, DC 20068
pepco.com
NYSE: POM

Pepco Seeks Recovery of Reliability Investments in Maryland

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Pepco, a subsidiary of Pepco Holdings Inc., has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to improve service reliability in Maryland and today asked the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to authorize a \$43.3 million increase in base distribution rates to help pay for the reliability investments it has made.

If approved, this would mean a \$4.80 per month, or 3.26 percent, increase on a typical residential customer's total bill. This equates to 16 cents a day in increased electric rates and a new average monthly bill of \$152.16 for a typical residential customer. A PSC decision is anticipated in early July 2014.

"Pepco has been focused on meeting and exceeding our customers' expectations," said Donna Cooper, president, Pepco Region. "For more than three years, we have been working to upgrade our system and enhance the reliability of service for our customers. We are achieving that goal, and our work continues."

In 2012, Pepco met or exceeded all of the Service Quality and Reliability Standards prescribed by the Maryland Public Service Commission, and Pepco is on track to meet or exceed those standards in 2013. Customers are experiencing fewer outages, and the outages that do occur have shorter durations. Since 2010, the frequency of outages has improved by 38.5 percent, and the duration has improved by 40 percent.

Pepco expects further improvements as it continues its reliability work. From October 2012 through September 2013, Pepco has spent \$238.5 million for its Maryland distribution construction program and plans to spend an additional \$234 million in 2014.

"Because of this level of investments for our customers, today's filing is necessary for us to meet and exceed customer expectations and also meet the responsibilities to our investors. Although we had a rate decision this summer, we have continued investments. Today's request for a rate adjustment addresses work we have done since the last filing," Cooper said.

Pepco distributes electricity to 534,000 customers in Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland and 262,000 customers in the District of Columbia.

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Pepco asks for \$43.3M from customers

Wednesday - 12/4/2013, 3:22pm ET

WASHINGTON - Pepco customers in Maryland could see their bills rise by a few bucks if a newly proposed rate hike is approved.

Pepco submitted the rate increase application to the Maryland Public Service commission Wednesday.

The company is asking for \$43.3 million to help pay for investments it has made to improve the system between October 2012 and September 2013. It reports investing \$238 million into the improvements, which it calls the Reliability Construction Project.

The improvements, including trimming trees, upgrading feeder and underground lines, have made a difference in the number of customer outages, Pepco says.

"Customers had 38.5 percent fewer outages and a 40 percent decrease in the duration of outages in Maryland," says Pepco Region President Donna Cooper.

For the average customer, using 1,000 kilowatt hours per month, it would be an extra \$4.80 on their monthly bill if the PSC approves Pepco's request.

Customers in both Montgomery and Prince George's counties will be able to contribute public comment on the proposed changes. Those dates will be set by the PSC.

The utility company expects to hear whether its request was approved in July of next year.

Montgomery County Councilmember Roger Berliner issued a statement after hearing of Pepco's request:

"In the most recent rate cases, the Commission has found that Pepco had sought recovery of expenditures that were not proper and reduced their requests by more than 50 percent. I would fully expect our County to actively participate in this proceeding, as we have in the past in accordance with legislation that I sponsored, and work to ensure that Pepco does not pass on to ratepayers costs that are not proper."

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The Washington Post

Pepco seeks rate hike in Maryland

By [Bill Turque](#), Wednesday, December 4, 2:15 PM

Pepco asked Maryland regulators for a \$43.3 million rate increase Wednesday, which if granted would boost the average residential bill for its half-million customers in Montgomery and Prince George's counties by \$4.80 a month.

Company officials said they are requesting the increase to cover the costs of upgrades to its infrastructure and reliability. The power company spent \$238.5 million from October 2012 to September 2013 to improve its ability to distribute electricity, according to an application filed Wednesday with the Public Service Commission of Maryland.

Pepco said it plans to spend an additional \$234 million in 2014.

[Maryland regulators rejected](#) the bulk of the company's last request for a rate increase in July 2012, sought just three weeks after a storm knocked out power to hundreds of thousands of customers.

The company has a request for a \$44 million rate increase pending with District regulators.

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The Washington Post

Pepco seeks rate hike in Maryland

By [Bill Turque](#), Published: December 4



Pepco asked Maryland regulators Wednesday for a \$43.3 million rate increase that would boost the average electric bill by \$4.80 a month for residential customers in Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

Company officials said the increase — the third requested in two years — is needed to cover the cost of upgrading its infrastructure and reliability.

The power company spent \$238.5 million from October 2012 to September 2013 to improve its ability to distribute electricity, and it plans to spend an additional \$234 million in 2014, according to an application filed Wednesday with the [state Public Service Commission](#).

Since 2010, officials said, the company has trimmed trees along 5,600 miles of right of way, upgraded 860 miles of underground lines and strengthened 130 feeder lines in Maryland, where the utility has 534,000 customers.

Donna Cooper, Pepco region president, said that the increase is also justified by improved performance and that power outages have declined in both frequency and duration by nearly 40 percent since 2010.

"We are committed to meeting as well as exceeding our customers' expectations," Cooper said in an afternoon conference call with reporters.

Pepco is also asking for an increase in the allowable return on investment to shareholders, from 9.36 percent to 10.25 percent.

The company has a request for \$44 million rate increase pending in the District, where it has 257,000 customers.

Pepco has a dismal reputation for service. [A 2010 Washington Post analysis](#) found that the company ranked near the bottom nationally among electrical utilities in maintaining service and restoring service after outages. In 2011, Maryland regulators [fined Pepco \\$1 million](#) — the largest penalty ever levied by the PSC against the utility — for failing to address problems that led to prolonged outages after storms and even on days with fair weather.

Maryland officials reacted warily to news of the latest rate request. State Sen. Brian E. Frosh (D-Montgomery), an outspoken critic of the company's record, said that he had yet to examine the latest filing but that Pepco's claims of improved reliability are largely untested.

Pepco seeks rate hike in Maryland - The Washington Post

"They are certainly not visible, and the weather has been cooperative. I'm not sure we can say the service is any better," said Frosh, a candidate for state attorney general in the June 2014 Democratic primary. "I'm really skeptical that they ought to be awarded an increase."

In the past two rate cases, Maryland regulators granted less than half of what the company sought. In July, the PSC authorized [\\$27.9 million of a \\$60.8 million increase](#) requested by Pepco, concluding that evidence of improved reliability and infrastructure did not support the full amount. But the commission also approved a monthly surcharge — averaging 6 cents a month for residential customers when it takes effect next year — to improve reliability.

In July 2012, regulators approved just [\\$18 million of a \\$68 million request](#), denying, among other items, recovery of costs related to tree trimming and expenses incurred in defending itself in a PSC reliability investigation.

Montgomery County Council member Roger Berliner (D-Potomac-Bethesda) said in a statement Wednesday that he expects the county to participate aggressively in the rate case and to make sure that Pepco does not improperly pass costs on to ratepayers.

"In my view, its overall performance has not risen to the level that justifies an increase in its return on equity. It is still a utility that ranks in the bottom half of all utilities in terms of performance," Berliner said. "That is not good enough for the residents of Montgomery County, and it should not be good enough for the Commission."

Patrick Lacefield, a spokesman for County Executive Isiah Leggett (D), said the office is reviewing the company filing.

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[Snow likely Tuesday morning, could snarl morning rush hour traffic](#)

[Weather service issues Winter Storm Watch for Tuesday](#)

[School closings, accidents, power outages after winter storm, round two to come](#)

[Some melting today as ice/rain departs; more snow Tuesday?](#)

[Early season snow and ice storm for the Washington area \(PHOTOS\)](#)

When and Where to Deliver News Releases

- Ask reporters their preferred delivery method
 - Email
 - Web
 - Online service
 - Hard copy or fax?
- Maximize the potential for coverage with simultaneous digital exposure through social media. A buzz online can cause reporters to revisit a news release they previously passed up.

Give reporters what they want – and how they want it.

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Avoid Spam Filters

- Send from your own company email address
- Label as a news release in your subject line or at the beginning of web page releases
- Make your subject line informative
- Avoid all capital letters

*You don't present a gift from Tiffany & Co. in a brown paper bag.
Whether your email is opened starts with how it is packaged.*

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Avoid Spam Filters

- Avoid spam keywords
 - Urgent
 - Great offer
 - You have been selected
 - Free [anything]
 - Amazing [anything]
 - Accept credit cards
 - It's effective
 - Get started
 - Order now
 - Remove
 - Guarantee
 - This isn't spam

Electronic filters are looking for these.

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Avoid Spam Filters

- Ask reporters and assignment desks for the best email address to use for anything and for specific topics
- Get your release to the right person. Establish relationships with reporters so you keep up to date on who covers what, especially in newsrooms with revolving doors and beats.
- Don't get the reputation for sending spam releases. Don't just issue press releases – issue news releases only when you have real news.

*Once you get through the electronic filters,
you also have to pass human spam filters.*

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Make News Releases Simple to Use

- Send a Word document or PDF that reporters can cut and paste
- Answer basic questions: Who, what when, where, why and how
- Write in an inverted pyramid: The most important information comes first
- Use AP style
- Include usable quotes
- Avoid jargon
- Limit acronyms and always spell them out
- PROOFREAD

It's easy to forget that your ultimate goal is to think and write as a reporter. Remember the basics.

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NEWS RELEASE

5100 Harding Highway
Mays Landing, NJ 08330
atlanticcityelectric.com
NYSE: POM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. ~~ruary~~ 5, 2013

~~Pepco Holdings Inc.~~ ACE parent company donates \$250,000 to Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund

MAYS LANDING, N.J. – Pepco Holdings Inc., parent company of Atlantic City Electric, has ~~recently~~ donated \$250,000 to the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund (HSNJRF). Established by ~~Governor Gov.~~ Chris Christie and chaired by First Lady Mary Pat Christie, the HSNJRJ is a ~~non-profit~~ nonprofit organization that raises and distributes funds to organizations to support the recovery and rebuilding efforts of New Jersey communities ~~impacted-affected~~ by Hurricane Sandy.

~~“Our organization is pleased to make this contribution to the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund. It is our sincere hope that this donation will help the many needs of those affected by Hurricane Sandy. We saw firsthand the incredible devastation of this storm for our customers, our neighbors and our employees.”~~ said Vincent Maione, ACE region president.

~~Joseph M. Rigby, PHI chairman, president and CEO said, “We are proud that we are able to help our communities rebuild, and we commend the commitment of this organization to help so many deserving people.”~~

~~Joseph Rigby, Chairman of the Board, President & CEO, Pepco Holdings, Inc.~~

Donations to the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund can be made online at www.SandyNJReliefFund.org or mailed to Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund, Inc., P.O. Box 95, Mendham, ~~New Jersey~~ NJ, 07945.

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Make News Releases Simple to Use

- Make it obvious why the story is relevant to the ultimate audience – why the reporters' readers or viewers will want to know this. “Why should I care?”
- Paint a picture of what broadcast audiences will see or hear
- Compare published stories to your news releases to see what reporters picked up

Give reporters a reason to pick up your story.

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Make News Releases Simple to Use

- Play one story off another or give reporters a new angle

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release | **Thursday, March 07, 2013**

701 Ninth St., NW
Washington, DC 20068
pepco.com
NYSE: POM

Pepco Continues Significant Reliability Improvements

Improved feeders had 39 percent fewer outages and 42 percent shorter outages

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Customers are seeing significant improvements in service reliability as Pepco continues its reliability improvement work. From 2011 to 2012, outages on feeders we worked on as part of the improvement plan decreased day to day by 39 percent, and on those that did have outages were 42 percent shorter.

"We continue to work steadfastly to improve service for our customers," Thomas H. Graham, president, Pepco Region, said Thursday. "We are committed to investing in upgrading our system to make sure we can provide safe and reliable service day to day and during storms."

Pepco began a strategic initiative in September 2010 to improve reliability including trimming trees and replacing underground cable and power lines that span thousands of miles

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release | **Friday, March 08, 2013**

701 Ninth St., NW
Washington, DC 20068
pepco.com
NYSE: POM

Pepco Seeks Recovery of District Reliability Investments

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Pepco, a subsidiary of Pepco Holdings Inc., has been making significant investments in the District of Columbia to improve reliability and plans to continue to make infrastructure investments to serve our customers. Pepco today asked the District of Columbia Public Service Commission (PSC) to authorize a \$52.1 million increase in base distribution rates to help pay for the reliability investments it has made.

If approved, this would mean a \$5.89, or 6.23 percent, increase per month for a typical District residential customer using an average of 750 kilowatt hours per month. This equates to less than 20 cents a day in increased electric rates and a new bill of about \$100 a month for the typical residential customer. Pepco has requested a PSC decision within nine months from today's filing.

Use your release to provide a context for other stories.

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Make News Releases Simple to Use

NEWS RELEASE

701 Ninth Street NW
Washington, DC 20068
pepco.com
NYSE: POM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2012, 1:30 p.m.

Pepco Mobilizes More Than 2,000 Employees and Contractors to Respond to Hurricane Sandy

Additional 1,560 Outside Restoration Personnel Secured by PHI

*Massive Storm Could Cause Unprecedented Outages Across the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast
Restoration May Extend More Than a Week*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Pepco is preparing for the ferocious winds and rains from massive Hurricane Sandy that likely will cause immense destruction, extreme flooding and millions of power outages throughout the mid-Atlantic and northeastern United States. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has issued a federal emergency declaration for jurisdictions in our region. Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley and District of Columbia Mayor Vincent C. Gray also have declared states of emergency, because of the expected unprecedented devastation.

All available utility crews east of the Rocky Mountains have been committed to the restoration effort on the Eastern seaboard. PHI, Pepco’s parent’s company, has secured 1,563 line personnel from states as far away as Texas and Mississippi. A significant number of outside line personnel have already arrived at Pepco’s staging ground at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds. PHI is working to secure additional commitments as utilities release crews as the storm’s path becomes clear. Crews will be deployed based upon greatest damage and need.

Lead reporters to repeat your key messages and align coverage with your strategy.

Quotes Must Be Worth Repeating

- Use quotes to help tell your story
- Make sure to quote the right person

"As we walked up, someone said they saw smoke coming from the house," said lineman Ryan Callahan. "I ran to the truck, got a fire extinguisher and rushed in to put out the fire. I think the mother is really the one who deserves the credit. She rushed in there and found her boy. I have to give it to her."

Reporters won't use quotes unless they sound like they came from an actual interview.

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Quotes Must Be Worth Repeating

- Know the voice of the person quoted
- Sound like a human. Read them to someone else.
- **Before:** “Pepco is committed to making energy usage data available to customers and helping them better manage their energy more efficiently.”
- **After:** *“We’re giving customers a tool so they can better manage their energy usage. We’re providing them easier access to their own data.”*

Make sure your quotes use key words and reinforce key messages – but not at the expense of sounding like jargon.

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Quotes Must Be Worth Repeating

“Our employees are devoted to our customers and do hard work in harsh conditions around the clock to restore power. Now that they’ve finished the job here, they’re going to leave their families to go help hurricane victims in other hard-hit areas.”

Quotes need to add facts but also color.

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Key Takeaways

- Timing matters. Issue news releases at convenient times for reporters but also strategically to spark a reporter's interest or give a new angle for a story.
- Package your emails as news and make sure what you issue is actually newsworthy
- Remember the basics. Make it easy for reporters to cut and paste your wording and make it obvious why their audience will care about your story.
- Use quotes to tell the story, provide flavor and reinforce your key messages

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Questions?

Myra Oppel, APR, is regional communications vice president for Pepco Holdings Inc., where she ensures communications alignment as the primary communications interface across its three electric utilities: Atlantic City Electric; Delmarva Power; and Pepco, which serves Washington, D.C., and Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland. She began her communications career of more than three decades in newspapers and The Associated Press before transitioning to Northeast Utilities, where she headed media relations. She left NU in 1997 and worked as an award-winning political media consultant and PR consultant until she joined PHI in 2012.