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Officials call for investigation into PSEG-LI for 'failed communications'

One day after Tropical Storm Isaias ripped through Long Island, as many as 320,769 residents and businesses are still without power.

At a news briefing Wednesday morning, Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said that 135,000 PSEG-Long Island customers in Nassau were still affected.

She said officials would "fight to get the lights back on for our residents and businesses."

She noted that residents had trouble contacting PSEG-LI about the outage, which she said was "completely unacceptable."

She added that she was working to "open up those lines of communication" to get "the answers people really need."

The elderly, she noted, especially faced challenges reaching out, if they are unfamiliar with texting and other technology.

On Wednesday, New York State Sens. Anna Kaplan Todd Kaminsky, Jim Gaughran and Kevin Thomas called for an investigation into PSEG Long Island "for failed storm response."

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone at a press conference Wednesday said "clearly there was a communication issue" making it difficult for customers to get through.

There were no known fatalities from the storm to date.

PSEG Long Island said in a press release that "the storm affected communications systems, creating challenges in getting information to our customers. PSEG Long Island is reliant on Verizon for its internet and telecommunications systems. Without reliable support from Verizon, our systems cannot perform as they should. PSEG Long Island is actively working with Verizon to address this issue, and PSEG and LIPA have asked the DPS for assistance."

And the utility said it deployed over 2,000 line workers, tree trimmers, surveyors and other personnel to restore service.

The utility is reminding customers to take caution, and to keep clear of downed power lines and report them to 911.

— ADINA GENN

Survey shows pandemic still a significant threat to LI economy

The latest survey of commercial property owners found that COVID-19 remains a significant threat to their bottom line and the region's economy.

The monthly survey of area commercial real estate firms conducted by the Association for a Better Long Island and Long Island Builders Institute, shows virtually all respondents reporting a loss of revenue for the third quarter, while anticipating even greater revenue losses for the year.

Projections from a third of survey participants project at least a 20 percent revenue decrease for Q3 and an yearly revenue loss of more than 20 percent.

However, despite current revenue shortfalls, more than half of survey respondents now expect a modest profit in 2020, while fewer than 20 percent anticipate a loss for the year. Nearly 30 percent of survey participants believe the full impact of the pandemic has yet to be revealed.

Almost half of survey participants now believe the economy will need 12 to 24 months to fully recover from COVID-19,

while nearly 26 percent project a six- to 12-month timeline. In May, almost 50 percent of respondents predicted a two- to five-year recovery period, while last month, just 22.6 percent of respondents felt the recovery would take longer than two years.

More than 41 percent of tenants have informed their property owners that they will need 12-to-24 months for their businesses to recover. The survey also found that there was a 10 percent increase in the number of tenants who anticipate their business will need 2-to-5 years to recover.

About 75 percent of office landlords polled received June rent from 90 percent or more of their tenants, according to the survey, a big improvement from April when just 18.5 percent of respondents said they received rent from 90 percent or better of their tenants.

Two-thirds of survey respondents who own industrial property, say they received rent payments from at least 90 percent of their tenants last month.

Rent collection at multifamily properties outperformed all other sectors, while rent collection at retail properties improved, it still lagged behind other commercial property types.

About 85 percent of the survey participants who lease residential units received June rent from 90 percent or more of their tenants. However, 30.4 percent of responding retail property owners experienced nonpayment of June rent from more than half their retail tenants.

As property owners work with tenants who may not be able to afford rent, they must also adhere to guidance from lenders to avoid default. In June, 52 percent of survey respondents had yet to receive guidance or parameters from their lenders. Among the 48 percent of participants who did receive guidance from their lender, over 62 percent found it to be "somewhat helpful" to "very helpful," an almost 20 percent increase from May's results.

June's survey received 31 responses from landlords who represent 69.68 million square feet of commercial space and 37,750 residential units.

— DAVID WINZELBERG

Farmingdale State College grads are top earners in SUNY system

Alumni from Farmingdale State College are among the SUNY system's top earners.

That's according to SUNY Gradwages, an interactive dashboard that tracks and displays wages in New York State for SUNY graduates.

In the latest findings, Farmingdale graduates rank fourth best among the 64 SUNY campuses, following SUNY Maritime, SUNY Downstate Medical, and Binghamton University.

Farmingdale was the highest rated on Long Island.

The dashboard shows wages one, two, three, five, and 10 years post-graduation, and allows students to research by field of study and campus.

For example, according to the dashboard, projected earnings of Farmingdale State students with degrees in construction management engineering technology are \$89,783 five years after graduating, and \$117,532 10 years out.

— ADINA GENN



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