

Elizabeth A. Noël, People's Counsel

PRESS RELEASE

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D.C. PEOPLE'S COUNSEL TELLS C.O.G. ELECTRIC POWER SUMMIT "IT'S THE TREES. . . STUPID"

Speaking to the Metropolitan Washington Electric Power Summit, a forum of regional government officials and utility executives organized by the Council of Governments (COG), D.C. People's Counsel Elizabeth A. Noël summed up the lessons of Hurricane Isabel declaring "It's the trees, stupid, its always been about the trees."

"There remains a tremendous need for regional cooperation particularly with respect to tree maintenance, tree cutting and tree planting. Emergency response must become a priority of the electric utility company and communication with stakeholders, government officials and citizen-consumers must be honest, open and frequent," added the People's Counsel.

"What we should have learned from this event was to incorporate the lessons of "Isabel" into better standard practices and policies—at the utility company, as well as in governmental agencies having responsibility to protect public safety and the public's interest in receiving safe, adequate and reliable electric service," stated Ms. Noël.

To illustrate, Ms. Noël cited the 2003 Northeast Blackout that extended into Canada, "It has been said—"if there had not been contact by three (3) trees along a certain route. . .the 2003 Blackout would not have occurred."

"We can apply technology to the problem, but first we must: Get it; Perfect it; Train staff to use it; and Trust it. In the end a key part of this equation will be citizen education on emergency preparedness plans," said Ms. Noël.

"If not, if we fail to act on the lessons learned, then the trees we love will destroy the Company's ability to provide the electric power we need and deserve," concluded Ms. Noël.

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