



Testimony in Opposition to LD 1929
An Act to Improve Public Utility Service by Addressing Seasonal Hazards
May 8, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the committee, my name is James Cote and I am here on behalf of Versant Power to provide testimony in opposition to LD 1929.

Versant Power also follows industry best practices in its storm restoration processes, as outlined in its System Emergency Operations Plan, and conducts regular training and tabletop exercises to ensure procedures are regularly examined for effectiveness and potential improvement. This approach allows Versant Power to ensure sufficient internal and external resources are available, deployed and managed to complete an effective, efficient restoration response.

In regard to 4, *Duties of a public utility*, we would suggest the following:

- A. Versant Power has a long history of working with seasonal customers, both summer and winter, to ensure they receive safe, reliable service that meets their needs. All customers may designate authorized users on their accounts, including caretakers of seasonal dwellings, to assist with service issues at any time. Maintaining a list of caretakers of seasonal properties, especially in our service territory, would require a significant amount of time and staff resources that we believe would be better spent on other core priorities directed of Versant as a public utility for the benefit of all our customers. Additionally, these properties are not immune from changing ownership, and Versant Power is not in a position to monitor changes of these contact persons in real-time. We do not believe that all customers should be asked to pay for this.
- B. Our goal is to maximize maintenance, restoration, and reliability for all customers in the most safe and cost-effective manner, and prioritizing strategies that allow us to achieve that goal. However, when conducting planned maintenance that may interrupt service, Versant Power reaches out by phone to all affected customers in an effort to provide at least two days' notice for non-emergency work. Project managers often communicate with small businesses and other organizations to schedule such work to minimize impacts.

In terms of storm restoration protocols, Versant Power typically responds and restores service in the following order:

1. Public Safety/Emergency Situations
2. Versant Power Critical Transmission Infrastructure
3. Critical Infrastructure priorities identified by State and County Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs)
4. Main line feeders (3 phase)



5. Branch lines (3 phase and 1 phase)
6. Individual services

As restoration efforts wrap up after a storm, Versant Power assigns tree-trimming professionals to conduct sweeps of electrical circuits in affected areas to ensure any remaining damage that may not have been previously noticed or reported is addressed.

We would note, however, that many seasonal properties are not accessible year-round. Numerous roads in our service territory remain closed in winter and early spring, preventing tree-trimming crews and/or line crews from bringing in trucks to conduct inspections or make repairs.

- C. In response to this proposed provision, which would require us to conduct inspections at least annually of portions of our systems with a history of outages, prioritizing those with a history of issues related to season dwellings:
 - Versant Power does perform regular inspections of all transmission and distribution equipment, including poles and wires, as part of its asset management program. All distribution-level circuits also are on a five-year cycle for tree trimming, ensuring all power lines throughout the entire service territory in northern and eastern Maine are visited by professional arborists at least every five years.
 - Importantly, Versant Power engineers conduct detailed reviews each year of the worst-performing circuits on the system in terms of number of outages with the specific goal of developing solutions to improve performance. A range of solutions is examined to ensure specific outage causes are addressed in a meaningful and cost-effective manner.

Lastly, we would note that oftentimes private seasonal property roads are also host to private electric distribution lines where the owners of those facilities have built or acquired infrastructure and are responsible for the maintenance of that infrastructure.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to oppose this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration and we would be pleased to answer questions or provide more information for the work session.