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Testimony of Rep. Denise Tepler presenting

LD 1008, An Act to Require Joint Use Entities To Establish Permanent Liaisons with All County Emergency Management Agencies

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

Good morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and honorable members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Denise Tepler, and I represent House District 54, which is all of the Town of Topsham. This is my first ever appearance before this committee, and I am very pleased to present to you **LD 1008, An Act To Require Joint Use Entities To Establish Permanent Liaisons with All County Emergency Management Agencies.**

This bill arose out of conversations among the Sagadahoc County delegation in regard to a bill this committee passed into law last session, LD 372, An Act To Increase the Safety of Municipal Residents by Allowing Municipalities To Address Downed Wires in Extended Power Outages, sponsored by Rep. Jay McCreight. The liaison established as a result of that bill between Central Maine Power (CMP) and our county Emergency Management Agency (EMA) has been very successful for both parties. It has cut down on the number of calls to CMP from municipalities and fire departments following a storm or accident and centralized those calls with County Emergency Operations. And for Emergency Management, having one number to call 24/7 is enormously helpful in getting downed electrical wires dealt with rapidly.

However, as you know, telephone poles carry more than electrical wires. Their very name tells us that. When a windstorm, ice storm, heavy snowstorm or vehicle crash brings wires down off a pole, it may be difficult for a local fire department to judge whether it is a hot electrical wire, a telephone wire or a cable television wire. Because remember “No wire is safe to touch, evah.” Roads may be blocked by such a downed wire, and if it belongs to an entity that has not yet been required to establish a liaison with the EMA, it can take quite a bit of time to identify the wire and have it removed from the roadway.

From the point of view of individual consumers of the services of joint use entities, these services may be just as essential as power. For older Mainers living in rural areas, not having land line telephone services for several days can pose a real danger. For small home-based or rural businesses, the loss of phone lines or internet can cause serious business disruption.

There may be no one that is available to speak to during non-business hours in an emergency situation regarding the wires that provide phone or internet service. Let’s ensure that our

emergency managers have someone to contact at night and on weekends for these situations so that they can be addressed with the rapidity that they deserve.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions although there are those who will testify after me who may be more adroit technically.