

# Enough Is Enough, Pepco

Maryland lawmakers are taking on the highly criticized utility company

By **CHRIS GORDON**

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Pepco crews are making permanent repairs after struggling last week to restore power to customers in the wake of a storm. Meanwhile, lawmakers want to make sure Pepco is held responsible for similar mass outages in the future.

The number of outages and the delays faced by residents left in the cold for days has resulted in an outpouring of complaints, especially in [Montgomery County, Md.](#)

Elected officials at all levels of government are expressing frustration.

[Gov. Martin O'Malley](#) and the Maryland General Assembly announced emergency legislation to be introduced Thursday that would institute reliability standards for utility companies in the state. It would require service quality and reliability standards to be implemented by July 2012. Failure to meet the standards would result in civil penalties.

"Despite earnest promises, numerous press releases, and even a six point plan, families in our State went without service for up to five days," O'Malley said. "This type of failure is unacceptable. The people of our state deserve to have basic standards of reliability – standards to which they can hold their utilities and standards that include financial incentives for the utilities to adhere."

[Rep. Chris Van Hollen](#) sent a letter to Pepco saying "enough is enough."

"We have a pattern of failures followed by promises," he said. "It's time Pepco shows its customers it gets it."

Van Hollen is calling on Pepco to make changes all the way to the top.

[Pepco Holdings](#) President Joseph Rigby responded to Van Hollen saying, "Pepco remains committed to providing safe and reliable service to our customers. ... Fixing these problems is my personal commitment."

[Montgomery County](#) officials are concerned about the impact of the lengthy power outages.

"The concern is not only for residents but businesses that were put out of business for days by Pepco," Montgomery County Department of Economic Development Director Steve Silverman said.

For days, restaurants had to throw away food that was supposed to be refrigerated, gas pumps couldn't pump gas and stores couldn't serve customers.

Montgomery County Councilman Roger Berliner wants legislation holding Pepco responsible for losses due to power outages and has proposed that Pepco pay restitution to its customers for service not delivered.

Next week, Maryland lawmakers will hold hearings in Annapolis looking in to the reliability of Pepco's service.