

# **Pepco finishes last in customer satisfaction survey**

## **Company's score of 54 out of 100 is the worst among investor-owned utilities**

by margie hyslop, Staff Writer

Pepco finished dead last among 225 U.S. companies rated in the latest American Customer Satisfaction Index.

In so doing, its score of 54 out of 100 was well below the 74 average score for all investor-owned utilities, as well as the 74.7 and 73 averages scored by cooperative and municipal utilities, respectively.

And it was well below the ratings of some other utilities that serve customers in Maryland and the national capital region, where Pepco serves customers in Washington, D.C., and parts of Montgomery and Prince George's counties around Washington.

First Energy which merged with Allegheny Power and now serves customers in western and central Maryland under the name Potomac Edison scored a 78. Dominion Resources, which covers Northern Virginia, rated a 77.

Baltimore Gas and Electric Co., which serves customers in and around Baltimore and parts of central and southern Maryland, did not get an individual score because the number of BGE customers responding in ACSI's survey was not statistically significant, ACSI managing director David VanAmburg said.

ACSI is a private company based in Ann Arbor, Mich. The index was started in 1994 by researchers at the University of Michigan and private firms. Companies do not pay to be rated, VanAmburg said.

Scores were generated by a formula based on asking respondents from a random sample to rate companies, agencies and organizations on a scale of 1 to 10. Three variables were weighed: customer satisfaction, whether expectations were met and how nearly performance met an ideal.

In a statement reacting to the ACSI rating, Pepco said it has heard its customers "loud and clear" and is "working hard to upgrade [its] system."

In ACSI's 2010 survey, Pepco scored a 70, while Dominion Resources and First Energy each scored a 75.

Reports filed with the Maryland Public Service Commission show that Pepco's Maryland customers have experienced many more outages than those of nearby utilities.

According to a Gazette analysis of those reports in August, a key reliability measurement, the System Average Interruption Frequency Index, was about 61 percent higher for Pepco than for BGE and more than 100 percent higher than for Allegheny in 2009, when there were no major storm outages.

PSC chairman Douglas R.M. Nazarian, who joined the panel as chairman in 2008, said the commission did not fully appreciate the magnitude of problems in Pepco's service territory until after the thunderstorms that were associated with long, widespread outages in August.

He told a legislative committee in February that the PSC has determined that objective standards are necessary.

In April, Maryland lawmakers passed legislation requiring the PSC to set tougher, less subjective reliability standards.

On Tuesday, the PSC was to hear from a work group formed to help shape those requirements.

The next lowest rated utility scored by ACSI was Long Island Power Authority, a nonprofit municipal distributor that serves Nassau and Suffolk counties and part of Queens in New York.