

# Pepco seeks delay in rate increase bid

By Rachel Baye, Staff Writer, *The Washington Examiner*. Published: July 9, 2012

Embattled power company Pepco has asked a public regulator to delay a ruling on the utility's request to raise Maryland customer's electric bills, which was to come by Friday.

In the last week and a half, hundreds of thousands of Pepco customers have lost their power, with many living for more than a week without electricity -- surviving stifling heat without air conditioning. Some residents still have not regained power.

As a result, the request before the Maryland Public Service Commission to raise rates comes at an inconvenient time for Pepco. The company has asked for the decision to be delayed until Friday, July 20.

"The company, the commission and its staff have been focused on storm restoration efforts for Pepco and the other utility companies in the state," a company spokesman said. "In order to allow the focus to remain on restoration activities, Pepco requested a delay in the issuance of the commission's order."

Pepco spokesman Bob Hainey declined to answer additional questions.

By asking the utility regulator to delay the decision by a week, Pepco has effectively extended the commission's deadline, said commission spokeswoman Regina Davis. The Public Service Commission could issue a ruling anytime between now and July 20.

The delay means the company won't benefit from any potential rate increase until a week later than it otherwise would, Pepco General Counsel Peter Meier said in the formal request submitted to the commission.

Davis would not say whether Pepco's performance restoring power after the recent storms would affect the regulator's decision. However, Pepco's storm response, along with that of other area utilities, will be the subject of a separate Public Service Commission investigation.

Pepco's failure to restore residents' electricity quickly has renewed calls from residents and elected officials for Pepco to improve drastically or for the state to replace the electric company in its role as the major electric distributor for the District and its Maryland suburbs, whether with another private company or with a public utility, as Montgomery County Council President Roger Berliner has suggested.

Residents have signed petitions aimed at getting Pepco to improve and have written songs about Pepco's failings. Some residents have compared Montgomery County, one of

the wealthiest suburbs in the country, to a Third World country because of its electricity problems.

"I see a future in which our community has reliable power, and if Pepco is unable to provide it, we must have the ability to get it done ourselves," Berliner told reporters Monday. "Their track record means that we cannot give them the benefit of the doubt in any way with respect to this fundamental quality-of-life issue. And either they perform in a hurry or we take it away."