Date Filed: October 06, 2026

Witness: John P. DiPaola-Tromba, Sean D. Redding and Jenna Turner
Request from: Office of Consumer Counsel

Question:

(MS24E) Please refer to Exhibit ACCT-2(CLP-5A-05)(MS24E), p. 4-14. Did the Company receive completed and/or attached Emergency Restoration Tree Contractor Work Location forms for these timesheets? If so, please provide. If no, please explain how the Company validated these invoices.

Response:

Referring to Exhibit ACCT-2(CLP-5A-05)(MS24E), pages 12-14, the Emergency Restoration Tree Contractor Location report is provided on page 14.

The individual and tree crews referred to in Exhibit ACCT-2(CLP-5A-05)(MS24E), pages 4-11, were performing post-storm tree work and may not have completed Emergency Restoration Tree Contractor Location reports. Please refer to the Company's response to OCC-842[i], which describes the multiple pathways that post-storm tree work may be found by and submitted to the Company, how the post-storm tree work is organized and completed, and how the Company Arborists oversee and verify that the post-storm tree work is correctly charged to the right storm event.

Prior Referenced Response:

[i] OCC-842 Question

(STORM)

a. Does the Company limit vegetation management work performed after storms solely to work caused by the storm?
b. If yes to a, please describe how the Company verifies that all trees cut by the vegetation management company had storm damage (for example, if a tree was touching the line, how does the Company verify if this was caused by storm damage or growth?).

OCC-842 Response

Yes, the Company limits post-storm vegetation management work to damage caused by the storm.

Please refer to the Company's response to EOE-201 in PURA Docket No. 24-03-30:

During storm events, especially those that include high winds, rain, snow, or ice, trees may fail entirely, or parts of a tree may be damaged. When an entire tree fails or a part of a tree is damaged and impacts electrical infrastructure, the tree or tree part is cleared as part of storm restoration. However, trees that are damaged by then storm but have not fallen often remain following an event. Damage to the trunk or a large leader or branches in the canopy may result in a standing tree that is compromised structurally. Storms may cause trees to develop cracks or seams that will cause the tree to fail in the short term. Some trees that are uprooted during a storm event may fall over slowly or may be held up in other trees that will temporarily hold their weight but fail in the near term. Branches in trees may be broken but remain hanging in the tree's canopy, dangling above electrical infrastructure, and waiting for a future wind to finalize the break or dislodge a broken limb from the tree. These future potential threats to the system are often not resolved in real time during the restoration portion of the event because the Company's priority is to clear vegetation that poses an immediate safety or reliability risk (including blocked roads) and restore customers. Therefore, the Company returns after an event to address storm damaged trees and limbs that the Company finds to be a threat to reliability and public safety.

Patrolling for and removing storm damaged vegetation is a standard part of utility vegetation management storm response and is not included in the Company's normal vegetation management cycle. The Company has described post vegetation storms in previous storm cost recovery testimony. These storm damaged tree conditions are identified through follow up items noted on restoration events, non-outage events identified during the restoration post restoration patrols by operations, engineering or vegetation management or inquiries from customers or towns. There may be a delay in providing the assessment and mitigation to storm damage locations as the information from the patrols by other Eversource departments or locations provided by customers or towns may be received at different time periods after the completion of restoration. Mitigation of a storm damaged tree depends on the condition and location of the tree, access to tree and requirements to mitigate the damage as there is variable effort and time needed to complete the work. This can vary from cutting a single broken limb to requiring a crane or scheduling an outage to mitigate the risk to the system, workers and the public.

Following an event, tree contractors may be instructed to complete storm damage patrols and perform mitigation trimming or tree removals by Eversource Arborists.

Each Area Work Center ("AWC") has an Eversource Arborist who has extensive experience and is familiar with the area that coordinates tree contractor resources during both restoration and post-storm vegetation sweeps.

The AWC Arborist will direct post-storm patrols depending on the level of vegetation damage sustained during a storm event. Localized areas that experienced a higher magnitude of tree caused outages are assigned more detailed sweeps. If vegetation damage was widespread, post-storm sweeps will encompass the entire service area.

Eversource Arborists provide the tree contractors with overhead circuit or town maps to be patrolled for broken limbs and storm damaged trees based on where the storm impacted the Company's system. Guidelines are provided to the tree contractors as to what constitutes storm damaged vegetation. Please refer to EOE-201, Attachment 1, in PURA Docket No. 24-03-30, for the Company's Vegetation Management Storm Patrol Guidelines.

Eversource's tree contractors have practical experience and are trained to recognize the signs of recent storm damage. Conducting vegetation patrols post-storm is an industry wide practice. Contractors will immediately remove broken trees or branches as they discover them throughout their patrols. Occasionally, a job may require specialty equipment or a scheduled outage to complete the job safety. Any locations requiring additional scheduling to complete are relayed back to the supervising AWC Arborist for high priority scheduling.

The Arborists oversee this contractor tree work and verify timesheets are correctly billed to the right storm event.

Immediate threats as described in the guidelines are addressed as the patrol is performed or as soon as a crew can be committed to the work. Inventories and tracking is done by the crew and indicated on the timesheet or storm location sheet. Storm damaged trees that are potential threats as described in the guidelines are not tracked in a standardized way as they are identified and communicated through various means including customer calls, communications from towns, or provided lists from Engineering patrols. Please refer to EOE-201, Attachment 2, in PURA Docket No. 25-12-13, for an example copy of an invoice with an Engineering patrol storm damaged tree list.

The volume of storm damaged vegetation following a strong storm system may be significant. Storms such as high wind events, heavy snow, ice events, lighting, microbursts and thunderstorms may all result in compromised trees that did not fail immediately but are threats to reliability and public safety. The time required to address lingering vegetation hazard may vary from the time it takes to remove a broken branch to days for removing a large storm compromised tree. Given the tree crews available and on system, it may take anywhere from days to weeks to months to receive and address all storm damaged trees from a specific storm event.

Working on storm damaged vegetation is entirely separate than scheduled vegetation management work and is managed and billed as such. The Eversource AWC Arborist oversees contractor tree crews removing storm damaged vegetation which may be reported from various sources beyond tree contractor patrols. Following a storm event, tree wardens and customers will call in to report storm damaged vegetation that are immediate threats which adds to the volume of damaged trees discovered on patrols. Not all trees can be removed immediate upon discovery due to the instability of the trees. Depending on the tree condition and location, arranging a crane or special equipment may be needed to complete the tree removal safely. Storm damaged trees are more likely to require specialty equipment due to the unpredictable nature of their stability compared to regularly scheduled vegetation work. Arrangement may also be needed to temporarily turn off power while the tree work is completed if the tree's instability cannot be controlled or non-insulated equipment such as a crane is required.