

Panel Discussion on Chapter 140 – Maine GIS Users Group Meeting

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Panelists:

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This document is a summary only. It is not a word for word re-creation of the panel discussion.

What is Chapter 140?

(AS, PUC) It is a PUC rule that requires Maine utilities which are subject to PUC regulations to submit service area, infrastructure, distribution and transmission maps with specific attributes depending on the type of utility (water, electric, telecommunications)

Is it difficult to comply?

(GJ, AWD) Not for Auburn Water because they have a robust GIS system. Probably more so for smaller towns.

(FK, GWI) Chapter 140 will not apply to us, but compiling data would be costly and difficult.

(AS, PUC) The rule has been in existence since 2001; came out of the ice storm of 1998 – when emergency responders had lots of questions about where things were. They found that using paper maps and markers not the way to deal with this. GIS deemed part of providing a safe, adequate service. Utilities are using their GIS for lots of other things.

In January, PUC commissioners put out a new revision, but before it went out, the governor said all rules have to go through his office, so they are now in limbo. The proposal would be for companies to specify more narrowly which pieces of infrastructure are confidential and which are not. There is also a proposed change in how new data is delivered to us. Right now it says 'GIS format', so the PUC has received hundreds of different symbologies, etc. The idea is to move to a dvd data collection with specified fields required. Filings are due 4/1 each year; pushed back for 2011 because of pending changes to rule.

Why the rule? (Audience question)

(AS, PUC) 1. For PUC analysis.

2. Because PUC works with MEMA providing utility information during an emergency. Need to encourage utilities to map their infrastructure for use in emergencies and day-to-day operations.

3. Idea that utilities should be doing things to modernize their networks, etc to take advantage of cost savings and efficiencies.

The PUC is not trying to dictate how utilities do their mapping, but encourage mapping as an important piece of utility management.

Will MEGIS be managing the data? (Audience question)

(MS, MEGIS) MEGIS will manage it for PUC use. The data goes to PUC for MEMA to use in an emergency.

The state's job is to convert utility data into something state can use and filter to PUC. They rely on utility to upkeep and provide data.

What about stormwater data, etc? (AD, MEGUG)

(AS, PUC) Stormwater is not under PUC jurisdiction.

Why don't wind farms, etc, have to submit this data to PUC? (Audience question)

(AS, PUC) PUC doesn't regulate generation of energy, only distribution and transmission. PUC does not regulate all utilities. It regulates water, but not sewer.

Can you explain the 5000 rule?

(AS, PUC) Different sized utilities have differing dates for compliance. Smaller utilities still have time to comply. PUC rules in effect since 2001, not uniformly enforced still.

What is the reason for this in the first place? (Steve, BHE)

(AS, PUC) As previously stated, the ice storm of 1998 made it very apparent that government did not have access to adequate information for emergency management. Also, with Homeland Security considerations after 9/11, government needed information on the bigger picture. Emergency responders need to have the best information available to them, so do government officials. FEMA came in and wanted to send out crews or set up shelters, government didn't have the right information. If flooding occurs, there may be utilities downstream that need to be kept informed. Trying to collect this information at the time of a crisis is not efficient. Opportunity for people to see the same data helps avoid problems with people who need to all deal with different levels of a situation but whose decisions affect each other. In the past, they have all been dealing with different data. Need a common picture of the data to coordinate response efforts, even if that data is not real time.

(DW, USGS) Economic development needs are another reason, businesses considering locating in Maine need to know what is available as far as infrastructure.

(AS, PUC) The plan is that PUC will display information (but not give it out) at the Emergency Management Center. The data will need to be available quickly – we know that some data is transient, so will make decisions based on what they have, so the more updated the better. Having some starting point is better than having no starting point.

Outage information is separate, not part of Chapter 140.

(CK, MEGIS; BK, MEGIS; AS, PUC; DW, USGS; AD, MEGUG)

(FK, GWI) Data centers largest consumers of power worldwide; as a communications network, we need to see what power is available where.

What part of Chapter 140 works with Economic Development? (Audience)

(AS, PUC) PUC does not have a role in Economic Development.

Would like to see grid information available, this is an Economic Development issue. (FK, GWI)

(AS, PUC) Right now the only thing available is the Service Center Area which is available on-line. Proposal – that some information will be confidential, other information will be made available to help people make Economic Development and other decisions.

Telecommunications and power needs can't be determined simply by looking at a map. But it is a good place to start. It is a very complex issue. PUC are not going to make maps available without lots of process and thought, and some of the info will not ever be made public.

Chapter 140 is a commission rule and you are obligated to comply – but they are taking the position of working with the utilities and trying to get the best data they can provide.

Why provide infrastructure to PUC at all?

Emergency responders are not going to go fix power lines. But you can never tell which data you will need and any data can be used to help answer question and help emergency officials make the best decision they can given the situation and information they have.

(AS, PUC) The major proposed PUC changes are:

1. Instead of everything being assumed confidential, utilities will decide which items are confidential
2. Eliminate paper map submissions
3. Updated definition of telephone distribution