

# Has Pepco changed its communication strategy?

Last week, when we were waiting for Hurricane Sandy to hit, my main worry was losing power. Because the storm was predicted many days out, Pepco was actually ready, with out-of-state assets in place. Pepco also warned it could take a week or more to restore power (managing expectations?) Thankfully, Montgomery County was spared the worst of storm, and although some customers did lose power, the majority did not. Of course, New Jersey and New York were hit pretty badly and are still struggling to get power restored.

## **Detailed preparedness plan, communicated**

Pepco seemed to go to great pains to communicate exactly how it was prepared to deal with the storm (participated in mutual aid calls, got repair crews in place, and so forth). Prior to the storm, every customer received a robocall warning to be prepared.

## **More faces of Pepco**

I noticed that prior to the storm, Pepco held a couple of news conferences. Instead of featuring Tom Graham, Pepco's regional president, who was everywhere during the Derecho coverage, Pepco featured David Velazquez, the executive vice president for power delivery for PHI (Pepco's parent company).

Here's the video:

## **Different tone and trying to do the right thing**

In a full page color ad placed in yesterday's Sunday Washington Post, Pete Pedersen, Pepco's emergency preparedness

manager is featured (again, not Tom Graham). The headline is "Thank you for weathering the storm with us." The body of the ad seems to recognize how much suffering being without power engenders saying:

*Because so many other communities are suffering right now, we hope you will join us in making a contribution to the American Red Cross.*

*With any storm like this, we're all in it together.*

The ad includes the American Red Cross logo and how to make a contribution. This shows some element of corporate social responsibility, which is in stark contrast to the lack of empathy exhibited during the Derecho, when Pepco even tried to charge customers a fee for the days they did not have power.

Gone is the defensiveness of the post-Derecho advertising. But this is Pepco after all, and there still is an element of back-patting:

*But because of early preparations and your help in reporting outages and downed lines, we were able to respond quickly to this historic event.*

Is this a new Pepco? I am cautiously optimistic.

Your thoughts?