

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 1929

H.P. 1290

House of Representatives, May 6, 2025

An Act to Improve Public Utility Service by Addressing Seasonal Property Hazards

Reference to the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative EATON of Deer Isle.
Cosponsored by Representatives: BOYER of Poland, DODGE of Belfast, FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor, LOOKNER of Portland, MATLACK of St. George, RAY of Lincolnville, Senator: MOORE of Washington.

1 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

2 Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §2313 is enacted to read:

3 **§2313. Seasonal residential dwellings**

4 **1. Definition.** As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, "seasonal
5 residential dwelling" means a residential dwelling that is unoccupied for a period exceeding
6 30 consecutive days in a calendar year and is connected to a public utility, including, but
7 not limited to, electricity, water or telecommunications.

8 **2. Duties of property owner.** An owner of a seasonal residential dwelling shall:

9 A. Conduct inspections at least annually to identify and address potential hazards such
10 as overgrown trees or damaged utility lines; and

11 B. Arrange for services of a caretaker or responsible person during a period when the
12 seasonal residential dwelling is unoccupied to ensure the timely resolution of public
13 utility-related issues and shall provide contact information for the caretaker or
14 responsible person to each public utility to which the seasonal residential dwelling is
15 connected and to the municipality in which the seasonal residential dwelling is located.

16 **3. Duties of commission.** The commission shall:

17 A. Establish a statewide system to allow persons and public utilities to report hazards
18 related to seasonal residential dwellings. This system must include a hotline and online
19 portal for reporting downed trees, obstructions or other hazards and a process to ensure
20 that public utilities and municipalities are promptly informed of reported hazards;

21 B. Conduct a public education campaign to raise awareness among owners of seasonal
22 residential dwellings regarding the impact of seasonal residential dwellings on public
23 utilities and the importance of regular maintenance; and

24 C. Provide financial assistance to low-income owners of seasonal residential dwellings
25 to help them comply with the requirements of this section.

26 **4. Duties of public utility.** A public utility shall:

27 A. Maintain a list containing contact information for caretakers and responsible
28 persons for seasonal residential dwellings as described in subsection 2, paragraph B;

29 B. Develop protocols regarding repairs on portions of a utility line affected by hazards
30 related to seasonal residential dwellings with a focus on minimizing disruptions to
31 residential dwellings that are occupied at the time of the repairs and prioritizing
32 residential dwellings that are occupied at the time of the repairs in storm restoration
33 efforts; and

34 C. Conduct inspections at least annually of portions of a utility line with a history of
35 outages, particularly those with a history of issues related to seasonal residential
36 dwellings.

37 **5. Funding support.** The commission and a public utility shall seek federal storm
38 preparedness and infrastructure grants to fund the maintenance of the list under subsection
39 4, paragraph A and the inspections under subsection 4, paragraph C.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the owner of a seasonal residential dwelling to conduct inspections at least annually to identify and address potential hazards such as overgrown trees or damaged utility lines; arrange for services of a caretaker or responsible person during a period when the seasonal residential dwelling is unoccupied to ensure the timely resolution of public utility-related issues; and provide contact information for the caretaker or responsible person to each public utility to which the seasonal residential dwelling is connected and to the municipality in which the seasonal residential dwelling is located. It requires the Public Utilities Commission to establish a statewide system to allow persons and public utilities to report hazards related to seasonal residential dwellings; conduct a public education campaign to raise awareness among owners of seasonal residential dwellings regarding the impact of seasonal residential dwellings on public utilities and the importance of regular maintenance; and provide financial assistance to low-income owners of seasonal residential dwellings to help them comply with the requirements of the bill. It requires a public utility to maintain a list containing contact information for caretakers and responsible persons for seasonal residential dwellings; develop protocols regarding repairs on portions of a utility line affected by hazards related to seasonal residential dwellings with a focus on minimizing disruptions to residential dwellings that are occupied at the time of the repairs and prioritizing residential dwellings that are occupied at the time of the repairs in storm restoration efforts; and conduct inspections at least annually of portions of a utility line with a history of outages, particularly those with a history of issues related to seasonal residential dwellings.