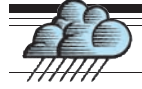


# The Washington Post

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SATURDAY, JULY 21, 2012

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## Pepco's requested rate hike curtailed

Md. panel denies bulk of utility's request; most bills will increase by \$2

BY VICTOR ZAPANA AND AARON C. DAVIS

Maryland regulators rejected the bulk of a rate increase sought by Pepco on Friday, three weeks after a storm knocked out power to hundreds of thousands and led to widespread outrage — again — over the length of time the power company took to restore electricity to its customers.

The state's 530,000 Pepco residential customers will face an average increase of \$2 per month. But for Pepco, the ruling marked the second time in seven months that state officials slapped the utility for chronic poor performance, saying additional revenue to pay for overdue improvements and to compensate stockholders would have to come from somewhere other than ratepayers.

Pepco could soon face additional financial woes. Regulators in the District have yet to rule on a similar rate-hike request, and under recently enacted legislation, Maryland could for the first time fine the company if it finds fault with Pepco's response to the June 29 derecho storm.

The commission made its decision based on information from before the storm. But politically, the issues had become inseparable, with lawmakers all the way up to Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) feeling political heat in recent weeks to appear tough on Pepco and other state-regulated utilities.

Raquel Guillory, a spokeswoman for O'Malley, said the ruling by Maryland's Public Service Commission would "send a message" that the state is holding the company responsible.

"The decision seems to represent the balance of two critically important realities," Guillory said. "Pepco, along with its shareholders, must take responsibility for the company's prior failings ... and at the same time, you have to make sure they are able to invest in the infrastructure needed."

A Washington Post investigation found that in 2010 Pepco ranked near the bottom nationally among electric companies in its ability to keep the power on and restore it after outages. Last year, the state levied what it called its largest fine ever on the utility, charging it \$1 million for failing to trim trees and fix other problems that led to the frequent outages.

State Sen. Brian E. Frosh, a Montgomery County Democrat who lost power in his home for five days following last month's storm, disagreed with O'Malley's office. He said even a \$2 increase, which goes into effect immedi-

PEPCO CONTINUED ON A5

### By the numbers

- Rate increase for residential customers is about **\$2 a month**.
- Under the ruling, Pepco will collect **\$18.1 million** of a sought-after \$68 million annual rate increase, which would have meant about \$5.50 more on the typical residential customer's bill, according to the Public Service Commission.
- The rate increase was the **first in three years**.

## Deadly rampage at Colorado theater

**The victims:** 12 moviegoers are killed, 58 others wounded in Aurora.

**The suspect:** James Holmes, 24, was arrested outside multiplex.

**The scene:** Gunman showed no emotion, fired indiscriminately.

BY DAVID FAHRENTHOLD, SARI HORWITZ AND BILL TURQUE



BARRY GUTIERREZ/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tom Sullivan, with family members, was searching for his son Alex, who went to see "The Dark Knight Rises" for his 27th birthday.

### AT THE THEATER

## Sad, wary and angry — but not staying home

BY FREDRICK KUNKLE

Rachel Brown used her lunch hour to stop by the AMC theaters in Largo to pick up tickets for a late-night showing of "The Dark Knight Rises." Brown said she briefly considered not seeing the movie — especially not at night — after a gunman killed 12 people at a multiplex in Colorado.

"But then I thought that's like ridiculous," she said. "It's like not going to school after Columbine."

Across the Washington region and the nation, people tried to ignore their fears and their grief as they went to see the most anticipated movie of the year, just as they had planned. Many did so warily, but they did not want a killer halfway across the country to make them cover.

Warner Bros., the studio that released the movie, did not pull the film from U.S. screens, and theater owners said showings would go on as scheduled.

MOVIE CONTINUED ON A9



KARL GEHRING/DENVER POST VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

A gas mask is marked as the first piece of evidence in the parking lot behind the Century 16 movie theater in Aurora, Colo., where James Holmes, 24, shown above in an undated photo, allegedly opened fire.



UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO VIA REUTERS

### Timeline of events

Here is a brief reconstruction of Friday's shooting at a midnight showing of "The Dark Knight Rises" at the Century 16 theater in Aurora, Colo. During the first 30 minutes of the movie, the shooter entered the theater through an emergency exit, released an unknown gas and opened fire. What happened next:

- 12:39 a.m. MT** First 911 call comes in. Frantic callers report "hundreds of people just running around" and "I've got a child victim; I need rescue."
- 12:40 a.m.** Approximately 90 seconds after the first call, police arrive at the theater and soon after arrest James Holmes, who is outside a rear entrance.
- 2 a.m.** After Holmes alerts police to explosives in his apartment, police start to evacuate 17th and Oswego in Aurora and begin to search the premises.
- 12:43 p.m.** Multiple coroner vehicles arrive at the shooting scene. At that time, there are still 10 bodies in the theater; two other victims died earlier at the hospital.

### Glock pistols picked in 3 mass shootings

The easy-to-handle gun was used in Colorado and Arizona and at Virginia Tech. **A6**

### The politics of guns

Those for tighter controls speak out, but change is unlikely. **A6**

### A familiar horror

As tragedy washes over the nation, we mourn again. **C1**

washingtonpost.com

For continuing coverage on the Colorado shooting, visit [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com).

AURORA, COLO. — There was a thump, the emergency-exit door swinging open. Then a flood of light pouring into the darkness. A figure wearing a gas mask and black body armor stepped into the theater.

The man paused. In the second row, Jennifer Seeger thought he might have stood there a full minute.

"Maybe he's just dressing up and being silly," she thought. After all, this was a midnight showing of "The Dark Knight Rises," Hollywood's latest Batman movie. If there was ever a place where a masked stranger in black might not cause alarm, this was it.

Police would later say that the stranger — allegedly James Holmes, 24 — seemed to have prepared meticulously. In that moment, he waited.

"He took his grenade and he threw it into the crowd," Seeger said, referring to a canister of an unknown gas. "Then he took his first gunshot, and that's when everybody knew he wasn't playing around."

The rampage that began in that moment early Friday morning killed 12 people and injured 58 others in this middle-class neighborhood outside Denver. The mass shooting echoed earlier attacks — Columbine, Fort Hood, Virginia Tech — where madness descended without warning, jolt-

COLORADO CONTINUED ON A7

### THE SUSPECT

## He had promise academically, but struggled

BY CAROL D. LEONNIG AND JOEL ACHENBACH

Before he allegedly walked into the Batman movie early Friday in Aurora, Colo., dressed head to foot in black body armor and carrying a handgun, a shotgun and an assault rifle, James Holmes was a graduate student in neuroscience — a PhD candidate who sat in classes with titles such as "Biological Basis of Psychiatric and Neurological Disorders."

He was known as a very quiet young man, introverted but pleasant. Holmes, 24, had shown scholarly promise in the recent past. He'd earned a merit scholarship out of high school in a sunny San Diego suburb. He had graduated from college with honors. From there, he'd gone to graduate school at the University of Colorado at Denver.

And then something changed. By this spring, Holmes had begun to struggle with poor test scores. He eventually decided to quit school.

HOLMES CONTINUED ON A8

## N. Korea stems defections with tightened borders, tougher punishments

BY CHICO HARLAN

SEOUL — With tighter border security and harsher punishments for those who cross into China, North Korea has forced a swift and drastic drop-off in defections this year, according to aid groups and South Korean officials.

The crackdown, they say, coincides with the rise of new leader Kim Jong Eun and suggests that his authoritarian police state is not only worried about people leaving the country but also strong enough to stop them.

As many as 20,000 additional soldiers have been dispatched to Seoul's Open Radio for North Korea, which has a network of con-

tacts in the North. Those guards, threatened with punishment themselves, have become less willing to take bribes from would-be defectors, other aid groups say.

As a result, outside experts say, the number of North Koreans entering the South after a circuitous journey through China is plummeting.

Last year, 2,706 North Koreans

came to the South. During the first half of this year, there have been only 751 — a 42 percent decline compared with the same period a year earlier.

The unprecedented drop-off reverses a 15-year trend. The downturn is especially jarring because it challenges an underlying assumption held by many analysts in the South: that the North would

face an ever-mounting problem keeping people within its borders. Indeed, after the North's famine in the mid-1990s, the number of defectors arriving in the South rose exponentially — from fewer than 100 in 1997 to more than 1,000 in 2002 to nearly 3,000 in the past few years, according to South Ko-

N. KOREA CONTINUED ON A12

## IN SUNDAY'S POST

**Rock steady** Can 19-year-old Alexandria native Sasha DiGiulian be the face of American climbing while balancing life as a college freshman? **Magazine**

**Failure to connect** Boggled down by organizational disasters, the Corcoran Gallery saw its donations dry up. **Sunday Arts**



KEITH LADZINSKI

**United Kingdom come** Glide through the heart of London on canal boats, enjoy an American revolution in British beer and visit Scotland's distilleries. **Travel**

Scissors icon

**\$87** SUNDAY'S COUPONS

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**SPORTS**  
**'Knees high! Head up!'**  
In London, a military-style fitness class is among many efforts being made to close a gender gap in exercise and sports programs. **D1**

**REAL ESTATE**  
**Great outdoors, tamed**  
Luxurious gazebos that add elegance to area gardens are replacing utilitarian decks and porches in the D.C. region. **E1**

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