Last week we received approval from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to begin work to proactively strengthen and protect our electric and gas systems against severe storms like those of the past few years.

We’re doing the upfront work needed before putting shovels in the ground to begin replacing vulnerable gas pipes, upgrading 29 substations and adding intelligence to our systems to speed restoration when there are outages.

With these steps, we’ll be making a start toward building the resilient infrastructure that New Jersey needs for the future. That’s good news for our customers and for hard-working families and businesses across the state. This critical work will create more than 2,000 jobs and bolster the state’s economy. It will help us be better prepared in future years in the face of Mother Nature’s fury.

But there’s more good news. We recently proposed to reduce residential natural gas bills this coming winter by 9 percent, saving customers almost $100 per year. Once this decrease goes into effect, gas supply reductions will have lowered bills 44 percent in the last 5 years. In addition, several months of bill credits this winter have saved the typical customer about $173 since last November.

Lower gas costs are one of the main reasons an unmatched opportunity exists to invest in a stronger infrastructure with minimal impact on customers’ bills. Seizing that opportunity is especially important, given all the work that needs to be done if New Jersey is to be “stronger than the storm.” We’re ready to get to work.