

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**NOTICE OF PENALTIES INCURRED AND DUE
FOR VIOLATIONS OF LAWS AND RULES**

**PENALTY ASSESSMENT: DG-180072
PENALTY AMOUNT: \$1,000**

Thomco Construction, Inc.
13600 44th St. NE
Lake Stevens, WA 98258

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes you have violated Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 19.122.030(6)(c) by failing to provide the required notice to a one-number locator service. RCW 19.122.055(1)(a) states, in part, that any excavator who fails to timely notify a one-number locator service and causes damage to a underground gas utility is subject to a civil penalty of not more than ten thousand dollars for each violation.

Commission pipeline safety staff (Staff) reviewed damage reports submitted by Puget Sound Energy (PSE), and information obtained from the One Call 811 database, and hereby notifies you that it is assessing a penalty against you in the amount of \$1,000 on the following grounds:

On May 22, 2017, Thomco Construction, Inc. (Thomco Construction) was excavating a trench for a new water main installation at 19227 49th Ave. W in Lynnwood, Washington. While excavating, Thomco Construction damaged a PSE gas service line. The Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) report submitted by PSE on June 23, 2017, indicated that a one-number locator service was not notified prior to excavation. Staff found that Thomco Construction did submit a utility locate request on April 3, 2017, which expired on May 18, 2017. Thomco Construction failed to request new utility locates prior to performing an excavation which resulted in damage to an underground gas utility.

On June 22, 2017, Thomco Construction was performing an excavation at 19109 49th Pl. W in Lynnwood, Washington. While excavating, Thomco Construction damaged a PSE gas main. The DIRT report submitted by PSE on July 28, 2017, indicated that a one-number locator service was not notified prior to excavation. Staff found that Thomco Construction again failed to submit a new utility locate request prior to excavating. This incident also resulted in damage to an underground gas utility.

For a first time offense, Staff typically provides a technical assistance letter to excavators who allegedly cause damage to underground utilities without first requesting utility locates. This letter provides information about Washington State's dig law and when utility locates are required. In this instance, due to the damage incidents occurring so close together, Staff was unable to provide the company with this information prior to the second damage incident. Therefore, Staff is offering to treat the first violation as a warning and only recommend a penalty for the subsequent violation.

Accordingly, Staff recommends that Thomco Construction be penalized \$1,000 for one violation of RCW 19.122.030(6)(c), for failing to provide the required notice to a one-number locator service. Staff proposes that the Commission offer to defer this penalty on the conditions that (1) Thomco Construction field crew involved in excavation, including company management, attend “Dig Safe” training provided through National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA), within 12 months of the date of this Penalty Assessment; and (2) Thomco Construction commits no further violations of RCW 19.122 within the next 12 months.

The Commission agrees with Staff’s recommendation and assesses a penalty of \$1,000 with an offer to suspend the entire penalty amount on the conditions that (1) Thomco Construction management and all crews complete NUCA Dig Safe Training within 12 months of this Notice, and (2) Thomco Construction has no further violations of RCW 19.122 within one year of this Notice. The Commission will waive the suspended penalty amount of \$1,000 if Thomco Construction complies with both conditions. If Thomco Construction fails to comply with either of these conditions, the \$1,000 deferred penalty will become immediately due and payable, in addition to any new penalties that the Commission might assess for additional violations.

These facts, if not contested or if proved at a hearing and not rebutted or explained, are sufficient to support the penalty assessment.

Your penalty is due and payable now. If you believe either or both of the violations did not occur, you may deny committing the violation(s) and contest the penalty assessment through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. The Commission will grant a request for hearing only if material issues of law or fact concerning the violation(s) require consideration of evidence and resolution in a hearing. Any contest of the penalty assessment must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that contest. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the contest.

If you admit either or both of the violations but believe there is a reason for the violation(s) that should excuse you from the penalty, you may ask for mitigation (reduction) of this penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. The Commission will grant a request for hearing only if material issues of law or fact require consideration of evidence and resolution in a hearing. Any request for mitigation must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that request. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the request.

If you properly present your request for a hearing and the Commission grants that request, the Commission will review the evidence supporting your dispute of the violation(s) or application for mitigation in a Brief Adjudicative Proceeding before an administrative law judge. The administrative law judge will consider the evidence and will notify you of his or her decision.

You must act within 15 days after receiving this notice to do one of the following:

- Pay the \$1,000 amount due;
- Notify the Commission that you accept the offer to suspend, and ultimately waive, the entire \$1,000 penalty amount due on condition that all Thomco Construction employees, including management, attend the “Dig Safe” training provided through NUCA within 12-months of this Notice; submit documentation of that attendance to the Commission within five (5) days of attending the training; and commit no further violations of RCW 19.122 within the next year; or
- Request a hearing to contest the occurrence of any or all of the violation(s); or
- Request mitigation to reduce the amount of the penalty.

Please indicate your selection on the enclosed form and send it to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, Post Office Box 47250, Olympia, Washington 98504-7250, **within FIFTEEN (15) days** after you receive this notice.

If you do not act within 15 days, the Commission may refer this matter to the Office of the Attorney General for collection. The Commission may then sue you to collect the penalty.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective January 24, 2018.

/s/ Gregory J. Kopta
GREGORY J. KOPTA
Director, Administrative Law Division

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT DG – 180072

PLEASE NOTE: You must complete and sign this document, and send it to the Commission within 15 days after you receive the penalty assessment. Use additional paper if needed.

I have read and understand RCW 9A.72.020 (printed below), which states that making false statements under oath is a class B felony. I am over the age of 18, am competent to testify to the matters set forth below and I have personal knowledge of those matters. I hereby make, under oath, the following statements.

1. **Payment of penalty.** I admit that the violations occurred and enclose \$1,000 in payment of the penalty
2. **Accept conditions.** I accept the Commission’s offer to suspend, and ultimately waive, the entire \$1,000 penalty amount on the conditions that all Thomco Construction employees, including management, attend the “Dig Safe” training provided through NUCA within 12-months of this penalty assessment; submit documentation of that attendance to the Commission within five (5) days of attending the training; and commit no further violations of RCW 19.122 within the next year.
3. **Contest the violations.** I believe that the alleged violations did not occur for the reasons I describe below (**if you do not include reasons supporting your contest here, your request will be denied**):
- a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision.
- OR b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.
4. **Request mitigation.** I admit the violations, but I believe that the penalty should be reduced for the reasons set out below (**if you do not include reasons supporting your application here, your request will be denied**):
- a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision.
- OR b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing, including information I have presented on any attachments, is true and correct.

Dated: _____ [Month/Day/Year], at _____ [City, State]

Name of Respondent (company) – please print

Signature of Applicant

RCW 9A.72.020:

“Perjury in the first degree. (1) A person is guilty of perjury in the first degree if in any official proceeding he makes a materially false statement which he knows to be false under an oath required or authorized by law. (2) Knowledge of the materiality of the statement is not an element of this crime, and the actor’s mistaken belief that his statement was not material is not a defense to a prosecution under this section. (3) Perjury in the first degree is a class B felony.”