

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: DG-210958

PENALTY AMOUNT: \$5,000

Investigation #8471

UBI: 601-178-753

SERVICE VIA EMAIL

Prairie Electric Inc.
6000 NE 88th St.
Vancouver, WA 98665
karin@prairieelectric.com
rodh@prairieelectric.com

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes that Prairie Electric Inc. (Prairie or Respondent) has violated the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 19.122.055(1)(a) by failing to notify one-number locator service before beginning excavation. RCW 9.122.055(1)(a) states, in part, that excavators who fail to notify a one-number locator service and cause damage to an underground gas facility are subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$10,000 for each violation.

The Commission reviewed findings and recommendations made by its staff (Staff) and hereby notifies you that it is assessing a \$5,000 penalty (Penalty Assessment) against you on the following grounds:

On September 9, 2021, Prairie was excavating at NW 9th Place & NW 26th Way, Battleground, Washington. While excavating, Prairie struck an underground Northwest Natural (NWN) natural gas facility. The Damage Information Reporting Tool report submitted by NWN on October 5, 2021, indicated that the Respondent was excavating without a valid locate ticket.

Staff conducted an investigation that included reviewing damage reports, investigation reports, and the One-Call Ticket database. Staff contacted Prairie and it stated they had nothing to add to the investigation. The evidence reviewed supported Prairie damaging a natural gas facility without a valid locate ticket.

The Company has been penalized previously by the Commission on May 1, 2019, with a \$1,000 penalty; March 2, 2020, with a \$2,500 penalty; and October 11, 2021, with a \$5,000 penalty. Prairie was also issued warning letters on December 29, 2014; September 22, 2016; February 15, 2018; and July 12, 2019.

Staff recommendation:

- A \$5,000 Penalty Assessment for one violation of RCW 9.122.055(1)(a) that occurred on September 9, 2021.

The Commission agrees with Staff's recommendation and as described above.

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 the violation did not occur, you may deny committing the violation and contest the penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. Or, if there is a reason for the violation that you believe should excuse you from the penalty, you may ask for mitigation (reduction) of the 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 to contest the violation or for mitigation of the penalty must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that request. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the request. *See* RCW 81.04.405.

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 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 their decision.

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

- Pay the \$5,000 penalty amount due; or
- Request a hearing to contest the occurrence of the violation; or
- Request mitigation to reduce the amount of the penalty.

Please indicate your selection on the enclosed form and submit it electronically through the Commission's web portal **within FIFTEEN (15) days** after you receive this Penalty Assessment. If you are unable to use the web portal, you may submit it via email to records@utc.wa.gov. If you are unable to submit the form electronically, you may send a paper copy to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, PO Box 47250, Olympia, Washington 98504-7250.

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 Lacey, Washington, and effective December 21, 2021.

/s/Rayne Pearson
RAYNE PEARSON
Director, Administrative Law Division

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT DG-210958 Investigation #8471

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 violation occurred and enclose \$5,000 in payment of the penalty.

2. **Contest the violation.** I believe that the alleged violation 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 provided above.

3. **Request mitigation.** I admit the violation, 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 provided 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.”