

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: D-220826

PENALTY AMOUNT: \$5,000

Investigation # 8659

SERVICE VIA EMAIL

Puget Sound Energy

6500 Ursula Pl S.

Seattle WA 98108

Troy.hutson@pse.com

gascompliance@pse.com

YOU MUST RESPOND WITHIN 15 DAYS OF THIS NOTICE – see page 4

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes that Puget Sound Energy (PSE or Company) has violated the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 19.122.030(3)(a) by failing to mark the boundary of the excavation area with white paint. RCW 19.122.070(1) states, in part, that violations of any provision of the chapter are subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$1,000 for an initial violation and not more than \$5,000 for each subsequent violation within a three-year period.

The Commission reviewed findings and recommendations made by the Washington State Dig Law Safety Committee (Safety Committee) and hereby notifies you that it is assessing a \$5,000 penalty (Penalty Assessment) against you on the following grounds:

On November 9, 2022, the Safety Committee heard case 22-035 against PSE and determined the Company violated RCW 19.122.030(3)(a) by failing to locate its facility with reasonable accuracy on November 10, 2021. The Safety Committee recommended that the Commission impose a \$5,000 penalty.

Commission staff (Staff) conducted an investigation that included reviewing documents, reports, and emails submitted by the Safety Committee, and observing the review process. During the review, Puget Sound Energy admitted to marking locates according to the descriptions on the locate ticket, not according to the white-lining or the polygons attached to the ticket. The Company explained it believed the request was confusing but also admitted that it did not seek clarification. The Committee determined, and Staff agreed, that the white paint on the ground takes precedence over the wording that is included in the description on a locate description. PSE agreed with this conclusion.

Prior to this incident, the Commission issued the following Penalty Assessments against PSE: \$10,000 penalty on December 8, 2021; \$5,000 penalty on November 3, 2021; \$5,000

penalty on September 13, 2021; \$5,000 penalty on June 24, 2021; \$5,000 penalty on March 24, 2021; and \$2,000 penalty on January 18, 2017. PSE also received a warning letter from the Commission on July 15, 2019.

Staff agrees with the Safety Committee's findings of probable violation and agrees with its recommendation to assess a \$5,000 penalty against PSE for one violation of RCW 19.122.030(3)(a) for failing to mark its locatable facilities with reasonable accuracy on November 10, 2021.

The Commission agrees with Staff's recommendation and assesses a \$5,000 penalty for one violation of RCW 19.122.030(3)(a).

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 a 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 Penalty Assessment 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 January 4, 2023.

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

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT D-220826 Investigation #8659

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 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 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 or she makes a materially false statement which he or she 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 or her 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.