COMMISSIONERS:
JASON SHAW, Chairman
TIM G. ECHOLS, Vice-Chairman
FITZ JOHNSON
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD
TRICIA PRIDEMORE

FILED
JUL 09 2024
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
GPSC



REECE McALISTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SALLIE TANNER
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 656-4501
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 656-2341
psc.ga.gov

BEFORE THE GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

GUFPA CASE NO. PSC 20-17113

DOCKET NO. 43265

American Tree Service, Inc.,
Respondent

DOCKET# 43265
DOCUMENT# 219308

NOTICE OF HEARING AND PROCEDURAL AND SCHEDULING ORDER

MAILED
7-9-2024

To: **American Tree Service, Inc.**
Attn: Robert Williams
5556 Atlanta Hwy
Flowery Branch, GA 30542

You are hereby notified that the Georgia Public Service Commission ("Commission") will hold a hearing in the Hearing Room of the Commission, located at 244 Washington Street, S.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5701, **commencing at 10:00 o'clock a.m. on September 18, 2024** and continuing on such further days as the Commission deems necessary until completed, for the purpose of hearing evidence regarding alleged violations of O.C.G.A. T. 25, Ch. 9, as set forth herein under the heading titled "Matters Asserted" that, if proven, may result in the imposition of a penalty against American Tree Service, Inc. (also referred to herein as "Respondents") in an amount not to exceed $10,000.00 per violation. Notification of the following matters is hereby given:

LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR HEARING

This hearing will be held under the authority and jurisdiction conferred upon the Commission by O.C.G.A. §25-9-13 and §46-2-91; and in accordance with the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act, O.C.G.A. §50-13, and the Rules and Regulations of the Commission.

PROCEDURES

The following are the procedures to which any party to this hearing should adhere with respect to this docket:

1. **Intervention:**

   (a) Any person or party upon whom a statute does not confer an unconditional right to intervene must file an application to intervene within thirty (30) days following the first published notice of the proceedings.

   (b) Applications must clearly specify the docket in which the applicant seeks to intervene. In addition to the requirements prescribed in O.C.G.A. §46-2-59 for applications for leave to intervene, the applicant must: (1) identify other intervening parties or intervening party applicants whose interest is similar to that of the applicant along with an explanation of why the identified intervening parties or intervening party applicant will not adequately represent the applicant's interest: and (2) state the applicant's present intention to submit direct testimony and by whom and on what subject. The requirements identified herein shall constitute a continuing obligation of the applicant or intervening party. Any objections to applications must be filed in accordance with O.C.G.A §46-2-59(d).

   (c) Any application for leave to intervene that is filed late must state the reason why such application was not filed within thirty (30) days of the first published notice. Objections to later intervention application must be filed in conformity with the requirements of O.C.G.A. §46-2-59(d).

   (d) The Commission will take up and rule on applications for leave to intervene at the first hearing date scheduled in this docket.

2. **Service:**

   In addition to filing an original and eight (8) copies of documents, with a 3.5" disk containing the electronic version of the document in either Microsoft Word for text documents or Microsoft Excel format for spreadsheets, with the Commission's Executive Secretary, copies of all pleadings, filings, correspondence, and any other documents related to, and submitted in, the course of this docketed matter should be served upon all other interveners recognized by the Commission in this docket.

3. **Hearing Exhibits:**

   It shall be the responsibility of the party sponsoring any hearing exhibits to see that the court reporter and all parties of record, in addition to the individual Commissioners or hearing officer, receive copies of all exhibits at the time of their introduction at the hearing.

RIGHTS OF RESPONDENT

Respondent have the following rights in connection with this hearing:

(1) To respond to the matters asserted in this document and to present evidence on any relevant issue;

(2) To be represented by counsel at its expense;

(3) To subpoena witnesses and documentary evidence through the Commission by filing requests with the Executive Secretary of the Commission; and

(4) Such other rights as are conferred by law and the rules and regulations of the Commission.

MATTERS ASSERTED

1.

The Commission has the power and authority to enforce the provisions of O.C.G.A. T, 25, Ch 9.

2.

The Commission Staff received reports of multiple probable violation of GUFPA alleging that on or about February 28, 2019, Respondent violated O.C.G.A. T. 25, Ch. 9. A copy of this report is attached hereto as Attachment A. The allegations contained in the report constitute violations of O.C.G.A. T. 25, Ch. 9.

STATUTES INVOLVED

25-9-6(a) Failure to contact the UPC before commencing excavation or blasting with mechanized equipment.

25-9-8(e) Failure to notify both the UPC and the affected utility facility owner/operator after a damage occurs

WHEREFORE, THE COMMISSION ORDERS that:

A. This Notice of Hearing and Procedural and Scheduling Order shall be served upon the Respondent by certified mail and shall constitute notice to the Respondent of the matters asserted pursuant to O.C.G.A. §50-13-13(a). A copy of this Order shall be served upon the Consumers' Utility Counsel pursuant to Commission Rule 515-2-1-.09; and public notice of this investigation and hearing shall be given by the Commission.

B. The Commission hereby adopts the schedule, procedures, and statements regarding the issues and matters asserted set forth within this Order.

C. A motion for reconsideration, rehearing, oral argument, or any other motion shall not stay the effective date of this Order, unless otherwise ordered by the Commission.

D. Jurisdiction over these matters is expressly retained for the purpose of entering such further Order or Orders as this Commission may deem just and proper.

E. The Commission hereby assigns this matter for hearing before its hearing officer, Nancy Gibson.

NOTICE: If Commission Staff determines to its satisfaction that the Respondent has satisfied the obligations of the prior Consent Order, Staff shall be authorized to *nolle prosequi* the Rule Nisi. No continuance or postponement of the above-scheduled hearing will be granted, except upon 72 hours' written notice and except for good cause shown. All requests for continuance should be addressed to Mr. Will Culbreath at Georgia Public Service Commission, 244 Washington Street, SW, Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5701 [facsimile # 404-463-6532] or via e-mail to wculbreath@psc.state.ga.us. Please include documentation in support of your request for continuance. If your presence is required in court or before a government agency on the hearing date scheduled in this Notice, you must provide a copy of the court or agency calendar or subpoena showing the date and time of the conflicting hearing. Only upon receipt of written response from the Commission excusing your appearance are you excused from your duty to appear at the hearing noticed hereby.

The above by action of the Commission in Administrative Session on May 7, 2024.

Sallie Tanner
Executive Secretary

7-9-24
Date

Jason Shaw
Chairman

7-9-24
Date

COMMISSIONERS:

JASON SHAW, Chairman
TIM G. ECHOLS, Vice-Chairman
FITZ JOHNSON
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD
TRICIA PRIDEMORE

REECE McALISTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SALLIE TANNER
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 656-4501
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 656-2341
psc.ga.gov

BEFORE THE GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF:	)	
	)	
American Tree Service, Inc.,	)	DOCKET NO. 43265
RESPONDENTS	)	(PSC Case No. 20-17113)
	)	

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that this Notice of Hearing was filed with the Commission's Executive Secretary and a copy of same was served upon all parties and persons listed below via hand delivery as indicated by an asterisk, or by depositing same in the United States mail.

*Sallie Tanner, Executive Secretary
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

American Tree Service, Inc.
Attn: Robert Williams
5556 Atlanta Hwy
Flowery Branch, GA 30542

Darius Andrew, registered agent c/o
4729 Chariot Drive
Flowery Branch, GA 30542

Respectfully Submitted this 9th day of July, 2024:

Maritza Rivera, Admin. Assistant
Facilities Protection Unit
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington St. Ste. 112
Atlanta, GA 30334

COMMISSIONERS:
CHUCK EATON, CHAIRMAN
TIM G. ECHOLS, VICE-CHAIRMAN
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD
TRICIA PRIDEMORE
JASON SHAW

EXHIBIT 2

DEBORAH K. FLANNAGAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MICHELLE THEBERT
FACILITIES PROTECTION
UNIT DIRECTOR

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 463-6526
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 463-6532
www.psc.state.ga.us

9/24/2020

American Tree Service, Inc.
Attn: Robert Williams
78 Benefield Drive
Lavonia, GA 30553

Date of Incident: 2/28/2019
Docket #: 43265
Case #: PSC 20-17113 - American Tree Service, Inc.
Incident Location: 1162 Dan Waters Road, Commerce

To Whom It May Concern:

A Notice of Probable Violation(s) ("NOPV") of the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act ("GUFPA" or the "Act") has been filed with the Georgia Public Service Commission Pipeline/Facilities Safety Office ("Staff") naming you as the probable violator ("Respondent"). A copy of the Act can be found at www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/gacode (Title 25, Chapter 9). The probable violations alleged are as follows:

O.C.G.A. Violations

25-9-6(a) Failure to contact the UPC before commencing excavation or blasting with mechanized equipment.

25-9-8(e) Failure to notify both the UPC and the affected utility facility owner/operator after a damage occurs.

Violations of the Act are punishable by civil penalties of up to $10,000.00 (ten thousand dollars) *per violation.* **Staff recommends a civil penalty of $10,000.00. Respondent may choose from one of several options regarding the alleged probable violations. Staff recommends mitigation of $8,000.00 of the above-recommended civil penalty by attendance of five or more employees at a Commission approved damage prevention class. The respondent will be responsible for completing the training class and submitting the remaining $2,000.00 penalty in certified funds or cashier's check to the Georgia Public Service Commission.**

Specific information about the above probable violation(s) is provided in this packet so please read all documentation **completely** and **carefully**. In this packet, you will find the **Response Options, NOPV/Incident Report, Consent Agreement, GUFPA Questionnaire,** additional information on **Requests for GUFPAAC**, and a list of **Commission Approved Damage Prevention Trainers.**

YOUR AFFIRMATIVE WRITTEN RESPONSE IS REQUIRED WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THE DATE OF THIS NOPV (See "Response Options" page for more information). Failure to respond either by executing the consent agreement or requesting a hearing before the Advisory Committee will result in the issuance of a Rule NISI to be heard before the Georgia Public Service Commission.

If you have any questions, please call me at (404) 463-6526.

Sincerely,

Onterio Johnson
ojohnson@psc.state.ga.us
GPSC GUFPA Investigator

RESPONSE OPTIONS EXHIBIT 2

(Please check only one)

Respondent: American Tree Service, Inc.
Docket #: 43265
Case #: PSC 20-17113

Respondent may choose from **ONE** of the following **OPTIONS** to dispose of this case:

☐ **OPTION 1 – I Disagree and want to attend GUFPAAC**: If you *disagree* with the probable violation(s) alleged you may request to appear and have your case heard before the Georgia Utility Facility Act Advisory Committee ("GUFPAAC"), a committee of industry stakeholders and peers. Please dispute same by submitting a detailed written response and return it along with all supporting evidence (pictures, diagrams, maps, witness statements and any other documentation to be used in support of your position) and sign/return the below statement within **thirty (30) days** of this NOPV:

I hereby request the opportunity to present my case to the GUFPAAC and I certify under the penalty of perjury that the response(s) and information provided regarding the afore-mentioned probable violation(s) are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

_____ _____
Authorized Representative of Respondent Date

***Upon receipt of your signature above, your detailed written response and all supporting evidence, your case will be scheduled to be heard by the GUFPAAC and you will be notified by mail of the date of this GUFPAAC meeting.**

☐ **OPTION 2 – I Disagree and want a Hearing before the Hearing Officer:** If you disagree with the probable violation(s) alleged, please dispute by submitting a detailed, written response along with all supporting evidence (pictures, diagrams, maps, witness statements and any other documentation) to be used in support of your position **within 30 days of receipt of this letter.** If you need more time to gather your information, **you must contact the GUFPA staff to request additional time. Note: The information you provide will not close the case, it will assist the investigator in his/her investigation to arrive at a more informed conclusion. If at the point you still disagree with the findings of the investigator, your case will be heard by a Commission hearing officer.**

** **Sign below only if you are choosing Option 2** **

I certify under the penalty of perjury that the response(s) and information provided regarding the afore-mentioned probable violation(s) are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

_____ _____
Authorized Representative of Respondent Date

☐ **OPTION 3 – I Agree and Wish to Pay the Mitigated Civil Penalty and attend Training:** If you agree with the alleged probable violation(s) please complete, sign and return the **Consent Agreement** provided for in this package. A **minimum of five (5) employees** of your company shall attend Commission approved damage prevention training. You must pay the recommended **mitigated** civil penalty of **$2,000.00.** Staff must receive the **signed Consent Agreement** and **this "Response" page** indicating your decision, and the mitigated penalty amount by certified check or money order within 30 days of receipt of this letter.

PLEASE NOTE: Georgia Law requires that ALL information requested in OPTION 1 and OPTION 2 be provided upon Staff's request. (O.C.G.A. §§ 24-10-26, 46-2-20 and 25-9-1 *et. seq.*). Failure to respond and/or comply with these requests for information in the 30 days provided for shall result in the loss of one or more of the **OPTIONS** presented.

☐ **OPTION 4 – I Agree and Wish to Pay the Full Civil Penalty**: If you agree with the alleged probable violation(s) please complete, sign and return the **Consent Agreement** provided for in this package and pay the full recommended civil penalty of **$10,000.00.** Staff must receive the **signed Consent Agreement** within **thirty (30) days** of this NOPV. THIS OPTION DOES NOT REQUIRE TRAINING.

COMMISSIONERS:
CHUCK EATON, CHAIRMAN
TIM G. ECHOLS, VICE-CHAIRMAN
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD
TRICIA PRIDEMORE
JASON SHAW

EXHIBIT 2

DEBORAH K. FLANNAGAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MICHELLE THEBERT
FACILITIES PROTECTION
UNIT DIRECTOR

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 463-6526
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 463-6532
www.psc.state.ga.us

DAMAGE REPORT (PROBABLE VIOLATION) – PSC 20-17113

INCIDENT INFORMATION

INCIDENT DATE:	2/28/2019	MATERIAL TYPE:	Plastic
FACILITY TYPE:	Gas	SIZE:	2
INCIDENT ADDRESS:	1162 Dan Waters Road, Commerce		
UTILITY LINE FUNCTION:	Service		
MECHANZIED EQPT.:	Backhoe/Trackhoe		

LOCATE INFORMATION

LOCATE COMPANY NAME:	City of Commerce
LOCATE NUMBER:	
WAS FACILITY LOCATED?	No
LOCATE MARKS WITHIN 24 INCHES?	Unknown

REPORTING INFORMATION

REPORTING COMPANY:	City of Commerce Gas
CONTACT NAME:	Lonnie Robinson
CONTACT NUMBER:	706-352-1394
MAILING ADDRESS:	P.O. Box 348 27 Sycamore Street
CITY, STATE, ZIP:	Commerce, GA 30529
CUSTOMERS AFFECTED:	1
REPAIR COST:	$0.00

PROBABLE VIOLATOR INFORMATION

VIOLATOR COMPANY NAME:	American Tree Service, Inc.
CONTACT NAME:	ROBERT WILLIAMS
CONTACT NUMBER:	(706) 356-2190
MAILING ADDRESS:	Attn: Robert Williams 78 Benefield Drive
CITY, STATE, ZIP:	Lavonia, GA 30553

FACILITY OWNER INFORMATION

FACILITY OWNER:	City of Commerce
CONTACT NUMBER:	(706) 352-1394

PROBABLE VIOLATION(s)

O.C.G.A Violations

25-9-6(a) Failure to contact the UPC before commencing excavation or blasting with mechanized equipment.

25-9-8(e) Failure to notify both the UPC and the affected utility facility owner/operator after a damage occurs.

DESCRIPTION OF DAMAGES:

CITY WAS CALLED ABOUT BLOWING GAS INSIDE OF ONE OF CHICKEN HOUSES; UPON ARRIVAL WE DISCOVERED THAT CONTRACTOR HAD CUT A TWO INCH SERVICE LINE. OUR DEPARTMENT REPAIRED AND INFORMED CONTRACTOR AND OWNER OF GA 811 (CALL BEFORE YOU DIG). PURGED AND GRADED AREA

EXHIBIT 2

GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
GEORGIA UTILITY FACILITY PROTECTION ACT

NOPV / INCIDENT REPORT – PSC 20-17113

Mail, Fax or e-mail to:	Georgia Public Service Commission Facilities Protection Unit 244 Washington Street, SW Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Investigator:	Onterio Johnson
Work Number:	(404) 463-6526
Website:	www.psc.state.ga.us
Docket Number:	43265
Case Number:	PSC 20-17113
Report Date:	3/6/2019
Incident Date:	2/28/2019
Facility Owner:	City of Commerce
Facility Owner Phone:	(706) 352-1394
Locator:	City of Commerce
Locator Phone:	(706) 372-5630
Excavator:	American Tree and Grading
Excavator Phone:	(706) 356-2190
Violator:	American Tree Service, Inc.
Contact:	ROBERT WILLIAMS
Address:	Attn: Robert Williams 78 Benefield Drive
City, State, Zip	Lavonia, GA 30553
Incident Location:	1162 Dan Waters Road
Incident City:	Commerce
Incident County:	Jackson
Jurisdiction:	NOT REPORTED

UTILITY LINE IMPACT

Facility Type:	Gas
Material Type:	Plastic
Size (Diameter/Voltage/Pairs/etc.):	2
Pressure (PSIG/Inches):	60
Utility Line Function:	Service
Number of Customers Affected:	1
Repair Cost:	$0.00

INCIDENT IMPACT

Injury (# of outpatient care):	0
Injury (# of inpatient care):	0
Fatalities:	0
Fire Department Response:	Unknown
Police Department Response:	Unknown

EXCAVATION ACTIVITIES

Utility Ticket Number(s):	
Equipment Involved:	Backhoe/Trackhoe
Nature of Excavation:	Water
Direction of Excavation Relative to Damaged Utility Line:	

EXHIBIT 2

SYNOPSIS

According to a submitted report of probable violation, American Tree Service, Inc. was excavating at 1162 Dan Waters Road, Commerce, Georgia on February 28, 2019. City of Commerce Gas reported this incident because American Tree Service, Inc. did not have a valid locate ticket prior to excavating with mechanized equipment.

INVESTIGATION:

Staff from the Facilities Protection Unit of the Georgia Public Service Commission received a notice of probable violation from City of Commerce Gas regarding the damage that occurred at 1162 Dan Waters Road, Commerce, Georgia on February 28, 2019. The submitted City of Commerce Gas damage report indicates American Tree Service, Inc., caused damage to a 2" plastic gas service line. According to the report the contractor was repairing a water line and while excavating with mechanized equipment, the contractor struck and damaged a buried gas service facility. This incident was reported as a violation of OCGA 25-9-6(a) Failure to contact the UPC (Georgia 811) before commencing excavation or blasting with mechanized equipment. OCGA 25-9-8(e) Failure to notify both the UPC and the affected utility facility owner/operator after a damage occurs.

Staff conducted a search of the Georgia (811) locate request database and was not able to find a valid locate ticket present. Staff was unable to find a valid damage ticket covering incident date and address. Damage at incident location coincides with the incident report from City of Commerce Gas. Thus far, based on this initial information submitted by City of Commerce Gas; GUFPA staff finds American Tree Service, Inc., in violation.

CONCLUSION:

The Pipeline/Facilities Safety Staff found **American Tree Service, Inc.** in violation of:

O.C.G.A. Violations

25-9-6(a) Failure to contact the UPC before commencing excavation or blasting with mechanized equipment.

25-9-8(e) Failure to notify both the UPC and the affected utility facility owner/operator after a damage occurs.

This investigation is pending the excavator's (your) response. If no response is submitted, staff will proceed to hearing based solely on the information submitted by the facility owner.

Note: The information you provide will not close the case, it will assist the investigator in his/her investigation to arrive at a more informed conclusion.

COMMISSIONERS:
CHUCK EATON, CHAIRMAN
TIM G. ECHOLS, VICE-CHAIRMAN
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD
TRICIA PRIDEMORE
JASON SHAW

EXHIBIT 2

DEBORAH K. FLANNAGAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MICHELLE THEBERT
FACILITIES PROTECTION
UNIT DIRECTOR

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 463-6526
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 463-6532
www.psc.state.ga.us

BEFORE THE GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

American Tree Service, Inc.,
RESPONDENTS

CASE NUMBER: PSC 20-17113

CONSENT AGREEMENT

American Tree Service, Inc., ("Respondent(s)"), hereby agrees to presentation of the following proposed disposition of the above named matter to the Georgia Public Service Commission ("Commission"):

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

1.

The Commission has the power and authority to enforce the provisions of the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act, ("Act"), O.C.G.A. T. 25, Ch. 9.

2.

The Commission received a Notice of Probable Violation ("NOPV"), alleging that on 2/28/2019, Respondent(s) violated O.C.G.A. T. 25, Ch. 9. The Staff has recommended to the Commission that the NOPV be resolved pursuant to the terms set forth in this Consent Agreement.

AGREEMENT

By signing below, Respondent(s) hereby agree that this matter should be resolved as follows:

1.

This Consent Agreement, if approved by the Commission, shall constitute a final resolution of this proceeding. Respondent(s) agree that each will abide by the terms of this Consent Agreement.

2.

Respondent(s) agree that each will comply with all applicable provisions of the Act.

3. **EXHIBIT 2**

Respondent(s) agree to pay to the Commission a penalty of $10,000.00 within thirty (30) days after the date of an Order issued by the Commission approving of this Consent Agreement. Payment must be forwarded to:

Georgia Public Service Commission
Facilities Protection Unit
244 Washington Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5701

All payment of penalties must be remitted in certified funds: money order, cashier's check, or official check.

Personal/Company checks will not be accepted.

4.

If Respondent(s) choose training in lieu of paying $8,000.00 of the penalty described above, Respondent(s) agree to promptly complete a training program acceptable to the Commission, ***minimum of five (5) employees required to attend training***. **The respondent will be responsible for completing the training class and submitting the remaining $2,000.00 penalty in certified funds or cashier's check to the Georgia Public Service Commission.**

5.

Respondent(s) understands that failure to comply with the terms of this Consent Agreement could subject each to additional penalties.

6.

This Consent Agreement shall not become effective until and unless approved by the Commission. Respondent(s) enter into this Consent Agreement without admission of fault or liability.

7.

The undersigned authorized representative of the Respondent(s) acknowledges that he/she has read this Consent Agreement and understands its contents. The undersigned representative acknowledges that the undersigned party freely, knowingly and voluntarily enters into this agreement. The undersigned representative hereby consents to the resolution of this proceeding as provided herein.

This _____ day of _____, 20__.

Consented to:
(***Sign, date, and mail, email, or fax***)

_____

On behalf of: American Tree Service, Inc.

PSC 20-17113

EXHIBIT 2

"GUFPA" Questionnaire

PSC 20-17113, Docket No. 43265

Please answer all questions in a written statement and include your case number on each page.

1. Name of entity (company, corporation, municipality, etc.) submitting this information?

2. Name of person submitting this information and title or position in the company or corporation?

3. Is this business incorporated? If incorporated, how so (corporation or limited liability)? In what state? Name and full address of the corporation's Registered Agent? If not incorporated, how is the business organized (i.e. partnership, sole proprietor, "D/B/A" or other)? Name and full address of the businesses highest ranking official (i.e. president or chief executive officer)?

4. Was a locate request made with **Georgia 811/Utilities Protection Center** prior to beginning excavation? If so, when and by whom? Provide the ticket number and the name of the company/party requesting the locate? Legal date of ticket? Expiration date of ticket? Provide name of party performing the excavation if different from ticket holder? Please provide a copy of all locate tickets associated with this excavation.

5. Was any other contractor (i.e. primary or subcontractor) involved? If subcontractor involved, is there a signed contractor agreement of responsibility? If subcontractor involved, is there a signed contract allowing one party to work under the locate ticket of another? Please provide a copy all contracts associated with this excavation.

6. Were you working under an emergency locate request? If so, please ***describe in detail*** what qualifies this as an emergency situation and describe what actions you took to perform your excavation with reasonable care in order to prevent damage to the underground facilities.

   Please note: An emergency as defined by the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act means there is an *immediate danger* to life or property or the loss of utility service requiring *immediate action*. Even in an emergency situation, the excavator is held responsible for exercising reasonable care in carrying out its excavation activities and is held responsible for any damage such activities might cause. Furthermore, there is no required show-up time for an emergency locate. The only timeframe required for performing locates by the facility owner/operator is 48 hours beginning the next business day as contained in 25-9-7 of the dig law.

7. Did you physically white-line **OR** "describe with sufficient particularity" (verbal white-lining), the area of excavation, prior to the utility owner/operator marking their facilities? Please provide proof thereof? If not, explain.

"GUFPA" Questionnaire EXHIBIT 2

PSC 20-17113, Docket No. 43265

8. Did your company utilize the Positive Response Information System through **Georgia 811/Utilities Protection Center** to verify that all utility owner/operators had responded prior to your beginning excavation? Please provide a copy of the Positive Response information for each locate ticket associated with this excavation? If not, explain.

9. Was locate marking done within the allotted time frame? If not, was a second request made to **Georgia 811/Utilities Protection Center**?

10. Were any/all utilities marked? If not, explain.

11. Please provide evidence (signed witness statements which must include name, address and contact number for each witness, pictures, maps, diagrams and any other written documentation) that supports each of the above responses.

12. Were the utilities marked accurately (within 18" of either side of the facility)? Were pictures taken of the utility markings prior to excavation? If so, please provide copies and any other supporting documentation.

13. Were the utilities "potholed" prior to excavation to get a visual of the utilities and exposed with non-mechanized means to prevent damage (i.e. shovel, hand tools, etc.)?

14. What type of work was being performed when the incident occurred (i.e. installing CATV, landscaping, grading, installing irrigation, etc.)?

15. What type of equipment or machinery was being used when the incident occurred (i.e. backhoe, mechanical auger, directional drill, etc.)?

"GUFPA" Questionnaire EXHIBIT 2

PSC 20-17113, Docket No. 43265

16. Was the direction of excavation parallel or perpendicular to the damaged utility?

17. Did excavation cease after the damage occurred?

18. Was Georgia 811/Utilities Protection Center contacted after the incident occurred? If yes, provide the damage ticket number and a copy of each damage ticket associated with this excavation.

19. Was 911 called for all damages to natural gas facilities?

COMMISSIONERS:
CHUCK EATON, CHAIRMAN
TIM G. ECHOLS, VICE-CHAIRMAN
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD
TRICIA PRIDEMORE
JASON SHAW

EXHIBIT 2

DEBORAH K. FLANNAGAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MICHELLE THEBERT
FACILITIES PROTECTION
UNIT DIRECTOR

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 463-6526
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 463-6532
www.psc.state.ga.us

REQUESTS FOR CASES TO COME BEFORE "GUFPAAC"

THE GEORGIA UTILITY FACILTY PROTECTION ACT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

All requests for cases to come before the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act Advisory Committee (GUFPAAC) shall be submitted in writing and shall be accompanied by each respondent's written response to each and every allegation listed in the notice of probable violation (NOPV) to which this notice is attached.

To better assist the Advisory Committee's preparation to review your case, the assigned investigator has requested from both the Excavator and Utility any pertinent documentation such as pictures, maps, and/or any other documentation.

Receipt of this documentation is being requested prior to the GUFPAAC meeting in order to insure the investigator and Advisory Committee both have the appropriate time in which to review all details related to your case. The admittance of additional information on the day of this meeting will be at the discretion of the Advisory Committee.

COMMISSIONERS:
CHUCK EATON, CHAIRMAN
TIM G. ECHOLS, VICE-CHAIRMAN
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD
TRICIA PRIDEMORE
JASON SHAW

EXHIBIT 2

DEBORAH K. FLANNAGAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MICHELLE THEBERT
FACILITIES PROTECTION
UNIT DIRECTOR

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 463-6526
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 463-6532
www.psc.state.ga.us

GUFPA Training

If your company has been assessed a civil penalty for a violation of the ACT with the offer to attend a Commission approved training class in lieu of paying the penalty, you may choose to have your employees attend damage prevention classes presented in English, Spanish or both.

For classes in English, contact one of the following:

Ms. Vicki Temple, Georgia Utility Contractors Association ("GUCA")
(404) 362-9995

Ms. Becky Kinsey, Georgia 811
(404) 375-6209 or email: bkinsey@georgia811.com

Mr. Ryan Boling, HB NEXT
(770) 619-1669 or (877) 442-4282 (Toll Free)

Mr. Diego Alvarado, daBaires Group
(678) 643-8278, 678-237-8192, or email: dsalvador678@gmail.com

Mr. Jimmy Davis, The Georgia Utility Training Academy ("GUTA")
(678) 635-8980 or email: guta@monroega.gov

For classes in Spanish, contact one of the following:

Mr. Diego Alvarado; daBaires Group
(678) 643-8278, 678-237-8192, or dsalvador678@gmail.com

Mr. Ryan Boling, HB NEXT
(770) 619-1669 or (877) 442-4282 (Toll Free)

Ms. Becky Kinsey, Georgia 811
(404) 375-6209 or email: bkinsey@georgia811.com

Ms. Vicki Temple, Georgia Utility Contractors Association ("GUCA")
(404) 362-9995

If you have questions or need additional information, please call (404) 463-6526.

COMMISSIONERS:
CHUCK EATON, CHAIRMAN
TIM G. ECHOLS, VICE-CHAIRMAN
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD
TRICIA PRIDEMORE
JASON SHAW

EXHIBIT 2

DEBORAH K. FLANNAGAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MICHELLE THEBERT
FACILITIES PROTECTION
UNIT DIRECTOR

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 463-6526
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 463-6532
www.psc.state.ga.us

BEFORE THE GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF:	)	
	)	
American Tree Service, Inc.,	)	DOCKET NO. 43265
RESPONDENTS	)	(PSC Case No. 20-17113)
	)	

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that this Consent Agreement was served upon all parties and persons listed below by depositing same in the United States mail.

American Tree Service, Inc.
Attn: Robert Williams
78 Benefield Drive
Lavonia, GA 30553

Respectfully Submitted this 24th day of September, 2020:

Marilyn K. Morris-Simmons

Marilyn K. Morris-Simmons, Admin. Assistant
Facilities Protection Unit
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street, Ste. 112
Atlanta, GA 30334

GEORGIA DIG LAW

NOTICE OF PROBABLE VIOLATION

EXHIBIT 2

Why you are receiving this letter?

You are receiving the attached information because our office (The Georgia Public Service Commission/ Facilities Protection Division) has been notified by a utility owner or operator that you have damaged their facility and have been submitted as having possibly violated one or more parts of the GA Dig Law.

What is the GA Dig Law (also known as The Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act (GUFPA))?

The Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act (GUFPA), enacted by the General Assembly in July 2000, provides for the protection of the buried utility facility infrastructure within the State of Georgia. Excavators using mechanized equipment are required to call for a utility facility locate prior to excavating with mechanized equipment or blasting. Upon receipt of a locate request, each affected facility owner/operator must locate their respective utility facilities. Violations of the GUFPA are subject to a civil penalty of up to $10,000 each violations. For the full version of the Act please visit our website at www.psc.state.ga.us.

What is the GA Public Service Commission Facilities Protection Division?

We are responsible for the enforcement of the GUFPA Act.

I have paid for the damages to the utility company, why am I getting something from the PSC?

Damages paid for repairs to utility facilities are separate from the civil penalties assessed for violation(s) of GA's Dig Law. Although you may have paid for the damaged utility facility, you are now being assessed a civil penalty for probable violation(s) of the GA Dig Law.

How has an investigation been completed and I was not contacted before now?"

Utility owner/operators are mandated by Commission Rule to report ALL damages to their facilities. Utility owner/operators are to conduct an investigation of the damage and any resulting probable violation(s) prior to submitting the probable violation to the PSC. PSC Staff Investigators will assign each case a number and send out a Notice of Probable Violation ("NOPV") to the Respondent in order to 1) notify the Respondent of the alleged probable violation(s) and 2) request a written response and supporting documents that show a Respondent's side of the story.

I do NOT agree with the probable violation alleged how do I tell my side?

Once you have reviewed the information included in this package you have 30 days from the date listed on the letter to respond in writing, to each alleged probable violation and to provide all evidence you wish to submit in support thereof.

What are my response options?

There are several ways you can respond to the probable violation:

- Send in a written statement by mail, fax, or email of the events as you recall them. Send in any pictures or other documentation you may have along with witness statements if available. Use the questionnaire attached to the NOPV packet as a guide for your written statement.
- If you agree with the investigation please sign and date the attached consent agreement and mail or fax it back to our office.
- Contact our office and speak with your investigator (you must still submit your statement in writing).

What happens after I submit my response?

Your investigator will review your information along with the information that was submitted by the utility owner/operator and will determine/complete their investigation based upon their findings and will contact you either by mail, email, or phone call of their conclusion.

What happens if the investigator still finds me in violation after I have submitted my response and I still do NOT agree?

You may request to appear before the GUFPAAC (Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act Advisory Committee). The GUFPAAC is comprised of approx 13 members of industry stakeholders and your peers who will hear and make a recommendation on your case.

What happens if I do NOT respond at all?

After the 30 day response time has expired your case will be set for a *Rule NISI* hearing on the Title 25 probable violations of the Dig Law. Your case will be heard by a hearing officer who will issue a recommended order on the merits of your case. If the hearing officer finds that the probable violation(s) is(are) supported by the evidence, an additional one-thousand dollars will be added to the civil penalty initially recommended by Staff. For Title 25 *Rule Nisis*, the civil penalties cannot exceed $10,000.00 per violation.

How do I contact The Georgia Public Service Commission?

Our mailing address:
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334
Phone: 404-463-6526
Fax: 404-463-6532