

**ORIGINAL**

Decision No. 68283

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

NORTH OAKS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, )  
a corporation, )

Complainant, )

vs. )

SOLEMINT WATER COMPANY, )

Defendant. )

Case No. 7973

(Filed August 5, 1964)

James R. Markham and John Williams, for  
complainant.

Dr. William G. Bonelli, Jr., for defendant.

Dennis Mishek, for Department of Public  
Health of the State of California,  
interested party.

Chester O. Newman, for the Commission's  
staff.

O P I N I O N

A public hearing on the complaint was held before Examiner Rogers in Newhall on October 28, 1964, at the conclusion of which the matter was submitted. It is ready for decision.

The complaint alleges that the residents in the upper levels of the Sunshine Homes and North Oaks Developments and other contiguous residential areas served by the defendant were without water on eight different occasions since November, 1963, and that such periods without water have been for as long as eight hours at a time over eight consecutive days.

Seven water users testified at the hearing that the water failures continued for various periods in the service area in which

each resides. Each of the witnesses testified that this failure of water service ceased to exist early in July of 1964. One of the witnesses who resides in a low portion of the service area testified that the water is milky and unpalatable and she is forced to purchase bottled water.

A county fireman presented a record of water shortages at various locations in defendant's service area, some of which areas are included in the North Oaks Home Owners Association area and some of which are not included in said area. This exhibit (Exhibit 1) shows a record of water shortages between May 12 and August 30, 1964.

The Commission's staff investigated the complaint and filed a report (Exhibit 2). This report is summarized as follows: The formal complaint herein was preceded by two informal complaints. The complainants claim that there are frequent and sustained interruptions in their water service. Although the complaint of the North Oaks Homeowners Association also concerns service in the upper elevations of the Sunshine Homes tracts and parts of Sierra Highway, the most serious condition has existed in Tract No. 25932 located at the higher elevations of the North Oaks subdivisions.

Many customers in Tract No. 25932 were completely without water for several days on many occasions between November, 1963, and July 10, 1964. During that period, all of North Oaks, including Tract No. 25932, was served from the lowest pressure zone. On the latter date, the problem was corrected when a 75 hp booster pump was installed in order to reinforce the distribution system. There has been no report of water deficiencies in Tract No. 25932 and the other North Oaks tracts since the booster pump was activated.

The Sunshine Home tracts were without water on several occasions when a manually controlled 60 hp booster pump was not operated. This allowed a 210,000-gallon storage reservoir located above the subdivision at an elevation of 1,700 feet to run out of water. This could be prevented if the manually operated controls were replaced with automatic controls.

The report further states that the service area includes approximately five square miles spread out along Sierra Highway, Soledad Canyon Road, Sand Canyon Road, the North Oaks area and Sunshine Hills tracts, centering generally in the vicinity of Solemint junction; that the utility serves approximately 2,200 customers at the present time, about one-sixth of whom are billed at the minimum rate for water service through unmetered connections; that the utility anticipates that all customers will be metered by the end of the year 1964; that the average water use per customer-month was 1,910 cubic feet in 1963; that it obtains all of its water supply from six wells, located in the Santa Clara River basin, having a combined capacity with presently installed equipment of 3,160 gallons per minute; that additional wells and choice well sites are owned by the utility and will be used to increase the production as the system demand requires; and that all six wells pump directly into the lowest of four pressure zones.

It is further stated that seven reservoirs, having a combined storage capacity of 1,924,000 gallons, located around the service area at elevations of 1,550, 1,700, 1,850 and 2,150 feet above sea level, regulate the pressures of the four zones; that the six wells are automatically controlled by the water level in the

420,000-gallon reservoir located at the 1,550-foot elevation; and that the other pressure zones are supplied by booster pumps and the remaining reservoirs are located at successively higher elevations.

Construction appears to meet the minimum standards prescribed by the Commission's General Order No. 103 and conforms to standard acceptable engineering practice.

The utility has a permanent water supply permit issued July 5, 1961, by the California Department of Public Health. Several samples of the water are collected each week from representative locations throughout the system and tested for possible bacteriological content. None of the utility's sources of supply has ever been found to be contaminated.

The report states that the lower elevation tracts of North Oaks are served from a 14-inch main which extends through the lowest pressure zones from the six wells and the lowest reservoir; that Tract No. 25932 of North Oaks is located in the second lowest pressure zone. The 350 customers in this tract, out of a system total of approximately 2,200, are supplied from a 500,000-gallon reservoir at elevation of 1,700 feet which, in turn, is supplied from the lowest pressure zone by the 75 hp, 800 gpm booster pump installed July 10, 1964. Since the booster pump is manually controlled, the reservoir is not kept full at all times. This condition is a possible source of future trouble should the reservoir be allowed to become empty during peak demand periods. Consequently, this equipment should be converted from manual to automatic control. The reservoir is connected to the distribution system through 8-inch mains which branch and interconnect with 6-inch mains into a

recirculating arrangement. Static pressures at the upper and lower extremities of the tract are approximately 70 and 160 pounds per square inch, respectively, which indicates the maximum head is 370 feet. This head will produce 2,400 gallons per minute from the reservoir through 3,400 feet of 8-inch asbestos-cement pipe in addition to the 800 gallons per minute available from the booster pump, a total availability of 3,200 gallons per minute. If the reservoir were full at the beginning, this rate of flow could be maintained for approximately 30 hours.

In general, Solemint Water Company's supply facilities, combined with storage capacity, are adequate to serve the existing 2,200 customers, plus new services which may be added to the existing system in the foreseeable future. Since the 800 gallons per minute booster was installed July 10, 1964, the facilities which serve the upper zone of North Oaks are capable of serving several times the present number of customers in the subdivisions if the storage reservoir is filled to capacity during off-peak use. Automatic control of the boosters should eliminate interruptions of service in the areas where such difficulties have been experienced.

The staff recommends that within 180 days after the effective date of the order in this proceeding, Solemint Water Company should install automatic controls on the booster pumps which serve the upper areas of North Oaks and Sunshine Homes, to insure that the reservoirs will be kept full under normal operating conditions.

Upon the record herein, the Commission finds that:

1. Defendant has an adequate water supply and a system which meets the minimum standards of this Commission's General Order No. 103.

2. Prior to July 10, 1964, the defendant was working on its system and, as a result thereof, there were many periods during which some of the water users were entirely without water for periods ranging up to eight hours during several consecutive days.

3. This situation has been eliminated and water is available at all times to the complainants through the defendant's water system.

4. The Department of Public Health of the State of California has issued a water supply permit to defendant.

5. Defendant's booster pumps are manually controlled; this permits the reservoirs to be overdrawn and this overdraft could cause the water supply to fail in certain areas.

On the foregoing findings, the Commission concludes that the defendant should be required to install automatic controls on its booster pumps.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Within 180 days after the effective date of this order Solemint Water Company shall install automatic controls on the booster pumps which serve the upper areas of North Oaks and Sunshine Homes, to insure that the reservoirs will be kept full under normal operating conditions. Solemint Water Company

shall notify the Commission in writing within 10 days after the completion of the installation and placing in operation of the automatic controls.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty days after service on the defendant.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 30<sup>th</sup> day of NOVEMBER, 1964.

Frederic B. Hallock  
President  
George H. Hoover  
William B. Bennett  
Commissioners