

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 75901

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mrs. C. M. McCalman (Loretta))

Complainant

vs.

GREAT WESTERN WATER COMPANY

Defendant.

Case No. 3898
(Filed March 7, 1969)

Loretta C. McCalman in propria
persona.
W. W. Wingad, for defendant.
L. M. Van Landt, for the
Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

A public hearing on the complaint was held before Examiner Rogers in Palmdale and the matter was submitted.

Complainant is a customer of Great Western Water Service, Inc. named erroneously in the complaint as Great Western Water Company. The defendant is a California corporation principally engaged in the development and sale of real estate in numerous locations. In conjunction with the sale of real estate, it has established several small public utility water companies, including the one serving the complainant which is located approximately five miles west of Littlerock, Los Angeles County, and furnishes water to 87 metered and three flat-rate consumers in two pressure zones. Approximately 27,476 shares of stock have been issued. Warren O. Wagner, the president of the defendant, owns approximately 99.6 percent of the stock. Mr. Wagner has hired W. W. Wingad to manage his

interests. Mr. Wingad appeared at the hearing. The defendant's office is located in Pasadena, but it has recently hired a man to operate the system which is the subject of the considered complaint.

A staff engineer investigated and determined the following:

Source of Supply and Facilities

The system's source of supply is from one well located at the intersection of State Highway No. 138 and 57th Street East. Water is pumped into an adjacent 8,000-gallon hydropneumatic tank serving 68 customers in the lower pressure zone. The well also supplies a 128,000-gallon storage reservoir located at 42nd Street East and Avenue T-8. Approximately 22 customers in the upper pressure zone are supplied through a 10-hp booster pump and hydropneumatic tank, taking suction from the reservoir. No recent pump test on the well is available. Defendant's 1967 annual report to the Commission shows the well capacity to be 300 gpm. No interruptions to service have been attributed to a shortage of well supply, other than power failures to the pump motor.

Service

Field inspections of defendant's equipment and system operations were made on April 3 and 4, 1969. Customers were interviewed and pressures checked. Pressures were found to range from 45 to 84 psi. Customers complained of numerous service interruptions, excessive pressures, inability to contact company representatives, the absence of a standby source of supply and an unusual number of leaks in the water mains.

In 1968 and 1969 rerouting of approximately 2,000 feet of asbestos-cement main was made necessary by the construction of the East Branch Aqueduct of the California Water Plan through defendant's upper zone. Inferior workmanship on installation and inadequate inspection of this main resulted in a number of leaks and interruptions to service when it was pressurized. An interruption to the upper zone occurred in February 1969 when the 10-hp booster serving the upper zone burned out and required replacing.

A serviceman employed on March 7, 1969, is on a full time basis and makes a conscientious effort to repair leaks and keep the system in operation.

The well site is fenced but the gate is unlocked. The site occupied by the storage reservoir, booster pump and hydropneumatic tank is unfenced and facilities are open to vandalism.

Mrs. McCalman's complaint is as follows:

1. This company does not maintain regular office hours.
2. There is no emergency telephone number.
3. On occasion, unsafe and impure properties were used to expedite a leak fixture (burlap, inner tube, etc.). These are not materials of reasonable service life, they are unhealthful and could not withstand external forces while in service.
4. The pressure and holding tank site at 42nd Street East, is unsafe. Wiring is defective, the site unfenced and tank ladder exposed to easy entry.
5. There were numerous occasions of either emergency, or direct interruptions in water service with only two notifications to this date.

"6. There is no expediency relocation of water mains for the Department of Water Resources. This has been over four months. It does not meet requirements for depth in many places.

7. Two occasions of excessive pressure have broken pipe connections in my home. Upon questioning, I was advised a diaphragm in the pressure regulator was inoperative; hence, no correct pressure reading could be made.

8. Notification was not received by fire department officials when emergency interruptions occurred over the past four months.

9. Provision has not been made for inspection: i.e., new pipelines, repairs, well sites, exposed pipelines and type of materials used. We must rely on the integrity of the defendant.

10. As of March 5, 1969, there is no local employee available to obtain assistance in further complaints."

Mrs. McCalman requests enforcement of at least minimum compliance with the Commission's General Order No. 103; ability to take water "for granted"; normal expediency in emergencies; materials on hand for repairs; and an auxiliary system to guarantee water during emergencies.

Mr. Winged filed a reply to the complaint reading as follows:

"We do maintain regular office hours.

There is no emergency phone no.

We use a saddle clamp from Smith and Blair for repair of our leaks.

The pressure tank is safe; wiring is not defective, the site is not fenced in.

"Everyone is notified if the water is to be shut off.

It does meet all requirements for depth.

The diaphragm was fixed by Del Combbs.

Do not know if notification was made or if must be.

Inspections have been made and approved.

There has been an employee on the job full time at all reasonable hrs."

The complaint and answer were filed in March. The hearing was held in June. After the complaint was filed the staff hydraulic engineer investigated the system and prepared a report dated May 22, 1969 (Exhibit No. 1). He found that since March 7, 1969, the company has had an emergency telephone; that saddle clamps are now used to repair leaks; that the pressure tank is safe and the ladder has been removed; that the wiring is not in conformance with good wiring practices; that the tank site is unfenced; that since March 7, 1969, customers have been given notification of planned service interruptions as required by General Order No. 103; that records of interruptions have not been kept as required by General Order No. 103; that relocations of water mains for the Department of Water Resources were poorly planned; scheduled interruptions were too frequent and of excessive duration; streets have been left open too long; joint and thrust blocks were improperly installed resulting in several leaks, and mains on Avenue T-6 have been exposed due to recent rains; that the excessive pressures were caused by a faulty control switch operating a booster pump supplying the upper zone and this switch was replaced in March 1969; that in the future, the

local fire department officials will be notified of emergency interruptions; that inspection of system installations have been lax; that since March 7, 1969, a serviceman has been available on a 24-hour basis at a listed telephone in the area.

The staff engineer recommended that defendant should:

1. Investigate the possibilities of obtaining an emergency or standby source of water supply by reactivating an existing well or by negotiating with Palmdale Irrigation District to reactivate an emergency intertie that once existed at the intersection of Westmont Knolls Drive and Barrel Springs Road, and that a letter setting forth the results of these investigations should be filed with the Commission within sixty days of the effective date of this order.

2. Set up a procedure for prompt acknowledgment of informal complaints and inquiries.

3. Be required to file up-to-date tariff rules.

4. Furnish the Commission with a pump test of its existing well showing capacity in gallons per minute, static and pumping water levels and efficiency.

5. Set up procedures to implement the provisions of Paragraph II.2. of General Order No. 103 relating to continuity of service, emergency and scheduled interruptions, notifications to customers, records of interruptions, and reports of service interruptions to the Commission.

6. Install a locked gate at its well site on 57th Street East.

7. Fence the site occupied by the storage reservoir, booster pump and hydropneumatic tank.

8. Insure that future installations comply with the requirements of General Order No. 103.

The engineer also recommended that restriction against extending service outside the certificated area, without further order of the Commission, imposed by Decision No. 59934, dated April 12, 1960, and continued in force by Decision No. 71667, dated December 6, 1966, be continued in force.

Findings

The Commission finds that:

1. Complainant is a customer of and is furnished domestic water by the defendant.
2. Many deficiencies exist in defendant's system, service and operations. Scheduled and unscheduled service interruptions occur, excessive pressures have existed, and service personnel have not always been available during emergencies.
3. A local serviceman living within the service area should improve service quality and provide prompt response to complaints.
4. Defendant's filed tariff rules do not reflect present day practices in utility relationships with customers.
5. Decision No. 59934, dated April 12, 1960, in Application No. 39083, restricted defendant from extending outside its certificated area without further order of the Commission because---"Applicant has entered into several main extension agreements, particularly in the Westmont District, which contain many deviations from the utility's filed main extension rule," and "lack of responsible management." Decision No. 71667, dated December 6, 1966, continued this restriction in force.

We conclude that the following order should be entered.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that defendant:

1. Shall investigate the possibilities of obtaining an emergency or standby source of water supply and report in writing to the Commission within sixty days after the effective date hereof.
2. Shall set up a procedure for prompt acknowledgment of informal complaints and inquiries.
3. Shall file up-to-date tariff rules within sixty days after the effective date of the order herein.
4. Shall, within sixty days after the effective date hereof, furnish the Commission with a pump test of its existing well showing capacity in gallons per minute, static and pumping water levels and efficiency.
5. Shall set up procedures to implement the provisions of Paragraph II.2. of General Order No. 103 relating to continuity of service, emergency and scheduled interruptions, notifications to customers, records of interruptions, and reports of service interruptions to the Commission.
6. Shall, within sixty days after the effective date hereof, install a locked gate at its well site on 57th Street East.
7. Shall, within sixty days after the effective date hereof, fence the site occupied by the storage reservoir, booster pump and hydropneumatic tank.

8. Require that all future installations comply with the requirements of General Order No. 103.

9. It is further ordered that the restriction against extending service outside defendant's certificated area, without further order of the Commission, imposed by Decision No. 59934, dated April 12, 1960, and continued in force by Decision No. 71667, dated December 6, 1966, is continued in force.

10. In all other respects the complaint is dismissed.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty days after service, either personally or by certified or registered mail, on the defendant or its manager who appeared at the hearing herein.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 8th day of JULY, 1969.

William Lyons Jr.
President

Augusta

John P. Morrison

William J. ...
Commissioners