

Decision No. 86546

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

EASY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC.

Complainant,

vs.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY,
a corporation,

Defendant.

Case No. 10038
(Filed January 26, 1976)

Robert L. Vedell, Attorney at Law,
for complainant.

James A. Trecartin, Attorney at
Law, for defendant.

O P I N I O N

Complainant, Easy Construction Company, Inc., seeks an order requiring defendant Southern California Edison Company (Edison) to provide a locator service and information as to the location of all underground utility facilities as of the date they are installed.

Public hearing was held before Examiner Johnson at Los Angeles on July 30, 1976 and the matter was submitted on August 10, 1976. Testimony was presented on behalf of complainant by one of its vice presidents and on behalf of Edison by its chief engineer of the Customers Service Department and by its supervisor of the Special Services Section of the Customers Service Department.

Complainant's Position

Testimony presented on behalf of complainant alleged that:

- (1) Complainant, which installs water mains and sewers, has experienced difficulty in obtaining information on the location of Edison's underground facilities installed in new tract developments, condominiums, and town houses.
- (2) Complainant has occasion to contact Edison's locator service to obtain such information several times a month.
- (3) Complainant has sometimes been incorrectly informed that there were no Edison underground facilities in specific areas.
- (4) This incorrect information can result in complainant's damaging Edison facilities which sometimes results in the necessity of resolving damage claims through costly and time-consuming court action.
- (5) There is approximately a sixty-day delay from the time the underground facilities are installed until the information is available from Edison's locator service.
- (6) Complainant has not experienced similar difficulties with communication or gas utilities or with the Electric Department of San Diego Gas & Electric Company.
- (7) Complainant usually requests the location of underground facilities at least five days in advance of the need.

Edison's Position

Testimony presented on behalf of Edison alleged that:

- (1) As a standard procedure requests for information about the location of underground facilities are referred to the service planner responsible for the area in which the facilities are located.

- (2) The service planner checks inventory maps and recent underground inspectors' recordings to determine the presence of Edison facilities.
- (3) If these records indicate the presence of underground facilities, the person requesting the information is asked to go to the district office to obtain the necessary information from the records.
- (4) If the available information does not satisfy the person requesting the information, arrangements can be made to have a qualified individual meet at the proposed location and precisely locate the facilities by the use of a pipe finder or cable locator.
- (5) The information the service planner has is current. There is a delay, which may be as long as 60 days, between the time the facilities are installed and the time the plant is noted on permanent records but this delay does not affect the availability of current information from the service planner.
- (6) Requests for information are noted on a standard form and kept on file. There is no record of such requests having been made for some of the specific instances referred to by complainant in his testimony.
- (7) When cable is laid in a new subdivision prior to the installation of the transformers, the cable ends are exposed and staked and should, therefore, be readily discernible.
- (8) Edison normally provides tract maps delineating its facilities to developers for use by contractors such as complainant.
- (9) Edison facilities are laid in trenches provided by the developer who should be able to locate the various underground facilities for his subcontractors.

Discussion

Edison's standard procedure of providing information on the location of underground facilities as described in the record of this proceeding should result in the dissemination of accurate and timely information. It would appear, however, that there are instances when the contractor has received erroneous information about the location of such facilities. Because of the wide variety of possible causes for such errors it is not always possible to find their source. It is noted, however, that the specific instances of inaccurate information discussed on this record involve telephonic communication. Needless to say, oral information is generally more subject to misunderstanding than written correspondence. The "Underground Plant Location Request" form used by Edison (Exhibit 3) is apparently filed in Edison's Customers Service Department files. It appears that the simple expedient of furnishing a copy of this form to the customer would serve to confirm the information given over the telephone and thus assist in the elimination of errors.

Findings

1. Requests for information about the location of Edison's underground facilities are referred to its service planner responsible for the area in which such facilities are located.
2. The service planner checks inventory maps and recent underground inspectors' recordings to determine the presence of Edison facilities.
3. This information at the disposal of the service planner should be accurate and up-to-date. However, errors do occur.
4. The requested information is sometimes supplied over the telephone. Such information should be confirmed in writing.

The Commission concludes that the relief requested should be granted to the extent set forth in the following order.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Defendant Southern California Edison Company shall institute a program of furnishing a duplicate copy of its "Underground Plant Location Request" form to individuals requesting information about the location of Edison's underground facilities.

2. Except to the extent granted in paragraph 1 of this order the relief requested is denied.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty days after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 26th day of OCTOBER, 1976.

[Signature] President
William J. Lyons
Vernon L. Sturgeon
Leroy Ross
Robert Bateman Commissioners