

**STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA**  
**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**



<b>Public Service Commission Heartland Grading, Inc. Damage Prevention Enforcement</b>	<b>Case No. GS-13-735</b>
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**CONSENT ORDER**

The North Dakota Public Service Commission (Commission) has determined that:

Heartland Grading, Inc. (Heartland) is a California corporation with principal offices at 3146 Tiger Run Court, Suite 116, Carlsbad, CA 92010.

Montana-Dakota Utilities Co (MDU) is a North Dakota corporation with principal offices at 400 N 4th St, Bismarck, ND 58501-4022.

On August 12, 2013, the Commission received a Third Party Damage Complaint from MDU. The complaint alleged a violation by Heartland of N.D.C.C. ch. 49-23: One-Call Excavation Notice System.

North Dakota Public Service Commission Staff (Staff) conducted an investigation including communication with Heartland, MDU, and North Dakota One Call (NDOC).

N.D.C.C. § 49-23-04(1) states:

Except in an emergency, an excavator shall contact the notification center and provide an excavation or location notice at least forty-eight hours before beginning any excavation, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, unless otherwise agreed to between the excavator and operator. If an operator determines more time is necessary for location, the operator may request a twenty-four-hour extension of the excavation or location notice by notifying the notification center. The notification center shall notify the excavator of the extension. An excavation begins the first time excavation occurs in an area that was not previously identified by the excavator in an excavation notice.

N.D.C.C. § 28-32-22 states:

Unless otherwise prohibited by specific statute or rule, informal disposition may be made of any adjudicative proceeding, or any part or issue thereof, by stipulation, settlement, waiver of hearing, consent order, default, alternative dispute resolution, or other informal disposition, subject to agency approval. Any administrative agency may adopt rules of practice or procedure for informal disposition if such rules do not substantially prejudice the rights of any party. Such rules may establish procedures for converting an administrative matter from one type of proceeding to another type of proceeding.

N.D.C.C. § 49-07-01.1 states:

Any person who violates any statute, commission order, or commission rule which applies to matters within the authority of the commission under chapters 8-08, 8-09, 8-10, 24-09, 32-25, and 51-05.1, titles 60 and 64, and title 49 except for chapters 49-22 and 49-23, shall, in addition to any other penalty provided, be subject to a civil penalty of not to exceed five thousand dollars. A violation occurring under chapter 49-23, in addition to any other penalty, is subject to a civil penalty not to exceed twenty-five thousand dollars. The commission shall develop policies for the assessment of penalties under chapter 49-23 which will take into consideration the severity of damages and the conduct of the offender. The civil penalty may be compromised by the commission. The amount of the penalty when finally determined or agreed upon in compromise, if not paid, may be recovered in a civil action in the courts of this state.

N.D. Admin. Code § 69-02-04-05 states:

In any proceeding in which the commission is authorized to act after opportunity for hearing, opportunity is afforded by service of notice fixing a reasonable period of time within which any person desiring to be heard may file a protest or request for a hearing. If a protest or request for hearing is not filed within the time provided, the commission may dispose of the matter on the basis of the pleadings, other submittals, and the studies and recommendations of the staff. A party not requesting oral hearing in the party's pleading is deemed to have waived a hearing for the purpose of the decision, but not for the purpose of applying for rehearing with respect to the decision. If a person requests a hearing but does not show good cause, the commission may determine the matter without a hearing.

Based on its investigation, Staff concluded that on August 9, 2013, Heartland personnel began an excavation as defined under N.D.C.C. § 49-23-01(7) while grading a parking lot at 509 NE 40<sup>th</sup> Ave, Minot, North Dakota. Heartland did not provide an excavation notice as required by state law at least forty-eight hours before the excavation.

Based on its investigation, Staff concluded that a 1-1/4 inch gas main was damaged during this excavation and that the amount of damage was approximately \$686.43. The operator has been reimbursed for damages. One commercial customer lost service for approximately 1 hour.

Based on its investigation, Staff concluded that there was no agreement between Heartland and MDU under N.D.C.C. § 49-23-04(1) prior to excavation that would relieve Heartland of its obligation to provide excavation notice at least forty-eight hours before the excavation.

Based on its investigation, Staff concluded that the excavation was not being made in a time of emergency under N.D.C.C. § 49-23-04(4), allowing the excavator to give notification after the start of the excavation.

Based on its investigation, Staff concluded that Heartland violated N.D.C.C. § 49-23-04 by failing to provide an excavation notice to the NDOC Notification Center at least forty-eight hours before beginning its excavation.

Heartland and the Commission have agreed to resolve this matter without further administrative proceedings.

In the attached Consent to Entry of Order, Heartland expressly waives its rights to a hearing in this matter, to consult an attorney, to present argument to the Commission, and to appeal from any adverse determination after a hearing.

There are no covenants, promises, undertakings, or understanding other than as specifically set forth in this Order.

The Commission issues the following:

**Order**

1. Heartland Grading, Inc. shall pay a fine of \$1000.00 payable to the North Dakota Public Service Commission within ten business days of the effective date of this Order.

DATED this 7 day of April 2014

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

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**Randy Christmann  
Commissioner**

**Brian Kalk  
Chairman**


**Julie Fedorchak  
Commissioner**

**CONSENT TO ENTRY OF ORDER**

The undersigned, on behalf of Heartland Grading, Inc. is authorized to act on behalf of Heartland Grading, Inc. and bind Heartland Grading, Inc. for purposes of this Consent Order; has read the Consent Order, knows and fully understands its content and effect; has been advised of the right to a hearing in this matter, the right to be represented by legal counsel, the right to present evidence and arguments to the Commission, and the right to appeal from an adverse determination after hearing; and that by signing this Consent to Entry of Order waives those rights in their entirety on behalf of Heartland Grading, Inc. and consents to entry of this Order by the North Dakota Public Service Commission to resolve the violation without further administrative proceedings. It is further expressly understood that this Order constitutes the entire settlement agreement between the parties, there being no other promises or agreements, either express or implied.

DATED this 7 day of April 2014

Heartland Grading, Inc.

By   
Its President  
{TITLE}