

WS-03478A-08-0608



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ORIGINAL

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

UTILITY COMPLAINT FORM

Investigator: Deb Reagan

Phone: [REDACTED]

Fax: [REDACTED]

Priority: Respond Within Five Days

Opinion No. 2009 78930

Date: 5/14/2009

Complaint Description: 08A Rate Case Items - Opposed  
05Z Quality of Service - Other

First:

Last:

Complaint By: Ginger

Morrison

Account Name: Ginger Morrison

Home: (000) 000-0000

Street: [REDACTED]

Work: Arizona Corporation Commission

City: Yuma

CBR: DOCKETED

State: AZ Zip: 85367

is: MAY 15 2009

Utility Company: Far West Water & Sewer, Inc.

Division: Water

Contact Name: Roxanne Fiddes

Contact Phone: [REDACTED]

DOCKETED BY [Signature]

Nature of Complaint:

\*\*\*\*\* REFERRED FROM CHAIRMAN MAYES' OFFICE \*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\* WS-03478A-08-0608 \*\*\*\*

Customer copied the Commission on the following e-mail sent to RUCO -

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2009 12:22 PM  
To: brigsby@azruco.gov  
Cc: Mayes-WebEmail; Newman-Web  
Subject: Far West Emergency rate increase Docet No. WS-03478A-08-0608

RECEIVED  
2009 MAY 15 A 9:55  
ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION  
DOCKET CONTROL

Enclosed you will find attachments regarding a letter referring to terrible smells and what damage these sewer smells can do to people homes. Pete and Rita Petersen (Letter attached) had extensive problem with Far West sewer smells that just about wrecked their home. They worked with Farwest Sewer and water personal on the problems. Now after over two years they are still experiencing sewer smells from the manhole on Onammi and E.14 1/2 . All the residents in that area on many occasions can't have their doors or windows open. In the winter months "October thru April" this area of the foothills is once again filled to compacity. Everyone is using their facilities ( flushing toilets and shower etc) and around 5 am every morning the sewer pumping trucks come out and flush this manhole. Early enough so most people don't notice except for those who are early birds and walk.

When people leave they don't come out as often to flush this manhole, which now makes a bad smell in the air in this area. Can't imigne what those empty houses smell like. My friends who are still here say that they are still smelling the sewer, especially in the evening. I told them to call Far West and report it. I feel this letter should be entered into evidence. thank you, Ginger Morrison - property owner

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Ms. Morrison attached the following letter from Pete and Rita Petersen which was sent to Far West Water & Sewer, Inc. in 2006 -

Far West Water & Sewer, Inc.  
13157 E. 44th St.  
Yuma, AZ 85367

2 Nov 2006

Dear Sirs:

Normally, when we leave Yuma for the summer we seal all of our drains including the commode, Summer of 2006 we were gone for six weeks and just plugged the drains and did not seal the commode.

Jul 24, 06 - We returned from our six week trip and the house was just fine and the commode still bad water in it. We were in Yuma for the next two weeks and then headed for San Diego area for four weeks.

Sep 11, 06 - We returned to a house filled with hydrogen sulfide sewer gas. We proceeded to try to air the house out. In the meantime we slept in our motor home. The things we noted were:

1. All of the water was gone from the commode.
2. All of the white cords to all of our electrical appliances had turned brown.
3. There was a trail of hundreds on dead ants coming from between our refrigerator and the cupboards and going along the floor below our cupboards for about four feet.
4. Some change (pennies mostly) were black or discolored.
5. The metal hinges on our commode lid had corroded and turned black.
6. We could not stay in the house for 5 days or we became light headed or got a headache.
- 7 The odor had permeated all of our bedding and clothing. Everything that could absorb the odor did.

Sep 12, 06 - We called Far West and explained the problem. Far West promised to send someone out on wed the 13th then on thurs the 14th, They sent Mark Kasney and a coworker (Heidie) with a meter that monitors the air. They could smell the gas in the house even though we had been airing it out for 4 days. When they went up on the roof to check the four vents, they said that three of them were within reason but the one over the kitchen was off the charts and registered 100. Mark suggested that Pete raise the vents to come up above the roof line. Pete did that. Mark said that the vent covers were not what we should be using and that we should remove them to allow better flow of air. Our builder and the county required those covers when our house was built. A builder friend of ours also said that those vent covers were what the builders were using. Mark thought that their may be a low spot in the sewer line and possibly gas accumulated there because there are few people out in our area in the summer using the system. He identified the gas as hydrogen sulfide or H<sub>2</sub>S.

Sep 16, 06 - They came back on Saturday to check the house again. The odor wasn't as bad because we were airing it out. They went to the manhole just down the street and their meter registered 200. Mark said that they would have all of the sewer lines on the West end of Onammi flushed the next day. They came the next monday and flushed the sewer at the intersection of Onammi and E. 14 1/2. Mark said that Far West flushes the system once a year but because of the problem they would be flushing four time a year.

We have done the following:

1. Washed down the inside of our house with OdoBan.
2. Washed our bedding and clothing.
3. Thrown away most of the food in the pantry.
4. Washed all of our dishes and pots and pans.
5. We also painted a large wall in our living room and we thought that the paint smell would mask the gas smell. It did for a while.

Since the first incident, we have still noticed the smell of gas but have found no pattern for it. Oct 31 06 - We called Far West to report that we were still having the problem of sewer gas. Karen said that she would have someone out on the 1st of Nov. to check the house again.

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Nov 1, 06 - Mark Kasney and Lynne Smith came out and talked to us. Mark said that he would check to see if they flushed out all of the manholes on our end of Onammi. He did say that when they flushed out the manhole at the corner of Onammi & E. 14 1/2 that they found a sewer cap in the system and they removed it. He again explained that they normally flush the lines once a year but if there is a trouble spot, they will flush the system four times a year. They apologized for our problem. Mark also suggested that we contact our builder to see how our plumbing was engineered. We explained that once our house was completed four years ago, we have not been able to get any response from our builder. It took 2 1/2 years to get him to provide us with a screen for one of our back windows. Also, if our plumbing was incorrect, why are we just now having a sewer problem?

The sewer pumping truck came out and flushed the manhole nearest us. The water in our commode dropped to the level of the P trap and the water pulsed while the pumping was going on. Normal level in our 1.6 gpf toilet is 2 1/4" above the P trap but when the line was hydro flushed the water level was sucked down below the P trap.

That evening, we discovered that a structure down the street from us (13309 S. Onanimi) has had the same problem. Their water level dropped down from 1 3/4" to 1 3/8" while the hydro flushing process was going on. When the people got back to Yuma and opened up the building, it was filled with sewer gas. They have had to open the building up every day to try to eliminate the smell. The gas has also turn all of the white cords brown. On the while the truck was flushing, they said that the water in the commode blew out, hit the lid that was down and spread out onto the floor. They said that the gas smell was strong at that point.

Nov 2, 06 - They came out to jack hammer the next manhole cover open and flush out that system just down the street.

Respectfully,

Pete & Rita Petersen  
13337 S. Onammi Ave.  
Yuma AZ. 85367  
Phone: 928-502-2202  
\*End of Complaint\*

### **Utilities' Response:**

### **Investigator's Comments and Disposition:**

Responded to customer with the following e-mail -

Dear Ms. Morrison,

Thank you for your recent e-mail to Chairman Mayes. It has been assigned to me for a response. I am a Consumer Analyst in the Utilities Division.

I will file your e-mail and the attached 2006 correspondence from Pete and Rita Petersen with the docket for the Far West Water & Sewer Company Emergency rate case as you requested.

Deborah Reagan  
Public Utilities Consumer Analyst  
Utilities Division  
AZ Corporation Commission  
\*End of Comments\*

**Date Completed: 5/14/2009**

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