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BEFORE THE ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

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AZ CORP COMMISSION
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RATTLESNAKE PASS, LLC,

Complainant,

vs.

TUCSON ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY,

Respondent

DOCKET NO. E-01933A-10-0125

**TUCSON ELECTRIC POWER
COMPANY'S ANSWER TO
FORMAL COMPLAINT**

AND

MOTION TO DISMISS

Tucson Electric Power Company ("TEP" or "Company"), through undersigned counsel, answers the Complaint filed by Rattlesnake Pass, LLC ("Rattlesnake" or "Complainant") on April 5, 2010. TEP respectfully requests that the Arizona Corporation Commission ("Commission") dismiss Rattlesnake's Complaint for the reasons explained below.

ANSWER

1. TEP admits that in August of 2009 it installed a voltage regulator bank to address a customer complaint (TEP Complaint No. 79501) of voltage irregularities at the Ironwood Reserve Development in Marana, Arizona. These regulators were placed at or near the 9100 block of North Scenic Drive on existing power poles, within a lawful easement granted to TEP in 1942.¹ That easement is for the 10-foot-wide corridor containing the electric line and system, including power poles and related fixtures and devices (Bk 76/Pg 594, Pima Co. Records) (hereinafter referred to as "TEP Easement"). The TEP Easement has contained an electric line since its creation. TEP's placement of the voltage regulators was based on electrical engineering

¹ See attached Exhibit A depicting the voltage regulators on the existing electric line.

1 requirements and ease of service. TEP maintains that the installment of the voltage regulators
2 was in accordance with any and all applicable requirements and denies any allegations to the
3 contrary.

4 2. Adjacent to the TEP Easement is a gas easement belonging to El Paso Natural Gas
5 Company ("El Paso"). The TEP Easement is specifically tied to the east boundary of the El Paso
6 easement, which was originally granted in 1933 and is forty feet wide.

7 3. TEP also holds a 1961 easement "through, over and across" another portion of
8 Complainant's property west of the easement corridor (Bk 1789/Pg 404, Pima Co. Records).

9 4. TEP admits that on or about August 10, 2009, it met with Mr. Greg Mitchell,
10 Manager of Rattlesnake, to discuss his concerns about the voltage regulators. TEP further admits
11 that it received correspondence from Mr. Mitchell shortly after that meeting, but the Company
12 denies Complainant's characterization of those communications.

13 5. TEP further admits receiving correspondence on February 8, 2010 from Mr.
14 Mitchell on behalf of Rattlesnake, but denies any and all allegations made in that correspondence
15 as it is inaccurate and misrepresents what actually occurred. TEP disagrees with all of
16 Rattlesnake's statements regarding applicable Arizona law. For any other statements made, TEP
17 is without sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief at this time as to the truth of those
18 statements contained within, and accordingly denies the same.

19 6. TEP offered on numerous occasions to relocate the regulators if Rattlesnake
20 would pay for those actions. Rattlesnake rejected those offers. TEP is under no obligation to
21 relocate these regulators at its expense.

22 7. TEP admits that on February 9, 2010, Mr. Greg Mitchell, Manager of Rattlesnake,
23 filed an informal complaint with the Commission making several allegations – including
24 criminal trespass and violation of Pima County Development Zoning Codes. TEP denies any and
25 all allegations contained within that informal complaint.

26 8. TEP admits that on February 18, 2010, TEP responded to Rattlesnake's informal
27 complaint denying the allegations contained therein. TEP also acknowledges receiving and

1 declining Rattlesnake's request for mediation on March 10, 2010 since previous efforts to resolve
2 the issue were rejected by Rattlesnake.

3 9. The Company denies that it has illegally accessed any easement. Further, TEP
4 maintains that it has lawful authority to access the electric line and voltage regulators pursuant to
5 Arizona Administrative Code R-14-2-206(C) and 207(E)(2)(a) and pursuant to lawfully recorded
6 easements. TEP has used the combined El Paso/TEP line corridor for access to its facilities for
7 over a half-century and under the common law of property, the creation of an easement for an
8 electric line "carries with it a reasonable right of access to enable the utility to discharge its legal
9 obligation to render adequate and reliable service." *Vermont Electric Power Co. v. Anderson*,
10 147 A.2d 875 at 880 (1959). It is established utility-industry practice for cooperating utility
11 companies to co-utilize the lands within their adjoining easements to minimize disruption to the
12 surrounding landscape, which TEP has done here. Otherwise, the Company would have to
13 denude its own easement, thereby further disrupting the natural surroundings.

14 10. TEP denies Complainant's allegation that it criminally or civilly trespassed on
15 Rattlesnake's property. Further, Rattlesnake's allegation regarding trespass must be dismissed
16 because the Arizona Corporation Commission cannot provide relief for claims of civil or
17 criminal trespass. Therefore, the Commission lacks jurisdiction to hear this allegation.
18 Consequently, it must be dismissed.

19 11. TEP denies Complainant's allegation that it overburdened its easement.
20 Complainant admits that the voltage regulators fit within the easement and it is clear from the
21 attached photo that the bank is indeed now part of an existing electric line within an existing
22 utility easement. Further, this allegation is outside the jurisdiction of the Commission and must
23 be dismissed. While the Commission "has broad powers with respect to those matters that fall
24 within its constitutionally or legislatively endowed authority," claims "that are unrelated to or
25 attenuated from those matters over which the Commission has express constitutional or statutory
26 authority do not fall within the Commission's exclusive jurisdiction." *Qwest Corp. v. Kelly*, 204
27 Ariz. 25 at 30, 59 P. 3d 789 at 794 (Ariz. App. Div. 2, 2002). Where a complaint raises

1 “relatively simple tort and contract issues revolving around a central inquiry: whether, under
2 traditional judicial principles, [the company] committed a civil wrong against [the complainant],”
3 then the “claims most important aspects involve facts and theories of tort and contract far afield
4 of the Commission’s area of expertise and statutory responsibility.” *Id.* at 32, 796 (internal
5 quotations omitted). Indeed, “tort and contract claims are the type of traditional claims with
6 which our trial courts of general jurisdiction are most familiar and capable of dealing.” *Id.*
7 Therefore, the Commission lacks jurisdiction to hear this allegation. Consequently, it must be
8 dismissed.

9 12. TEP denies that it has ever damaged Complainant’s property.

10 13. TEP maintains that it acted, and continues to act, in accordance with all applicable
11 Commission requirements by installing, operating and maintaining the voltage regulators at their
12 current location. TEP further maintains those voltage regulators are necessary for providing safe
13 and reliable electric service and that any attempts to prevent access to those facilities is in
14 violation of Commission regulations and applicable Arizona law.

15 14. Moreover, TEP maintains this is an inappropriate forum for Rattlesnake’s
16 allegations as being outside the jurisdiction of the Commission. TEP respectfully requests that
17 Rattlesnake’s Complaint be dismissed and all relief requested therein be denied.

18 15. TEP denies any and all allegations that the voltage regulators pose a safety threat
19 as installed.

20 16. TEP denies each and every allegation not specifically admitted herein.

21 **AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES**

22 17. Complainant has failed to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

23 18. The Commission lacks subject matter jurisdiction over Rattlesnake’s claims.

24 19. Complainant has alleged no “violation of any provision of law or any order or rule
25 of the commission” as required by Arizona Revised Statute § 40-246(A).

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RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 28th day of April 2010.

TUCSON ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY

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Original and 13 copies of the foregoing
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Copy of the foregoing hand-delivered/mailed
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ATTACHMENT

"A"

