

**BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission,	:	
Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement	:	C-2023-3044398
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc.	:	

INTERIM ORDER

1. On or about November 11, 2023, the Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement (I&E) filed a Complaint with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) at Docket No. C-2023-3044398. I&E filed proprietary and non-proprietary versions of the Complaint. The Complaint included the following averments:

- a. Columbia Gas and its contractor, Infrasource, failed to identify no less than 220 visually unacceptable fusions and saddle tee fusions on service lines and main lines. These visually unacceptable fusions lacked a complete impression of the cold ring clamp and/or were mitered.¹

- b. Columbia Gas and its contractor, Infrasource, failed to mark, label, or sign no less than 552 fusions according to Columbia Gas Standards.²

¹ Compl. ¶¶ 37a, 53.

² Compl. ¶¶ 37d, 54.

- c. Columbia Gas and its contractor, Infracore, allowed an unqualified contractor employee to perform and inspect plastic fusions.³
- d. Columbia Gas and its contractor, Infracore, failed to properly install no less than 44 saddle tee taps to a gas main line.⁴
- e. Columbia Gas and its contractor, Infracore, failed to capture and maintain accurate records of the pipeline components and personnel performing work on the pipeline.⁵

2. In the Complaint against Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc., (Columbia or Columbia Gas) I&E made several requests for relief, including that the Commission: (1) find Columbia Gas to be in violation of the Public Utility Code, Commission regulations, and/or Code of Federal Regulations for each violation alleged; (2) impose a cumulative civil penalty upon Columbia Gas in the amount of Two Million, One Hundred Eighty-Six Thousand, Four Hundred Sixty-Five Dollars (\$2,186,465.00); (3) direct Columbia Gas to perform each of the corrective actions detailed in the Complaint; and (4) order such other remedies as the Commission may deem appropriate.

3. On December 8, 2023, Columbia Gas filed an Unopposed Motion for Extension of Time to File an Answer, which was granted on December 12, 2023.

4. On January 12, 2024, Columbia Gas filed an Answer to I&E's Complaint. In its Answer, Columbia Gas, *inter alia*, denied all material allegations of fact and denied that the Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement was entitled to relief.

³ Compl. ¶ 55.

⁴ Compl. ¶ 56.

⁵ Compl. ¶ 57.

5. By notice dated January 23, 2024, this matter was scheduled for a Telephonic Prehearing Conference on March 13, 2024 before Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Conrad Johnson.

6. On March 12, 2024, I&E and Columbia Gas each filed Prehearing Memorandums.

7. On March 13, 2024, a Telephonic Prehearing Conference was held before ALJ Conrad Johnson.

8. On March 14, 2024, an Interim Order was issued holding establishment of a litigation schedule in abeyance and directing the parties to file a status report, allowing the Parties to explore settlement.

9. The Parties filed status reports on May 17, 2024 and November 14, 2024, indicating that settlement negotiations were progressing and ongoing.

10. On March 4, 2025, the Commission issued a Judge Change Notice assigning this proceeding to the undersigned.

11. On or about March 14, 2025, I&E and Columbia (Parties or Joint Petitioners" filed Joint Petition for Approval of Settlement (Settlement or Settlement Agreement) to resolve all issues related to the above-docketed I&E Formal Complaint (Complaint) proceeding. Attached to the Settlement was Joint Proposed Conclusions of Law and Ordering Paragraphs attached as Appendix A, and Statements in Support of the Settlement of I&E and Columbia Gas attached as Appendix B and Appendix C, respectively.

12. Although I&E filed a Formal Complaint and an Answer was filed by Columbia, there has been no evidentiary hearing in this proceeding.

13. In addition, neither Party proffered evidence by stipulation nor did the proposed Settlement contain any stipulation of facts to establish an evidentiary record.

14. In addition, it appears on its face that absent an evidentiary record, the proposed Settlement is not supported by substantial evidence.

15. In addition, it appears on its face that absent an evidentiary record, the undersigned Presiding Officer cannot determine whether the proposed Settlement is in the public interest.

16. The Settlement, on its face, presents a number of questions identified in the Settlement, regarding the discovery, investigation or inspections performed by the Parties, related to various issues, which may include the following:

- a. The nature and extent of discovery in this proceeding, including discovery of appropriate information and documentation from Columbia and the Contractor who Columbia identified as completing the socket fusion installations;
- b. The existence of any contracts and agreements between Columbia and any other persons or entities, including the Contractor who Columbia identified as completing the socket fusion installations;
- c. The obligations and duties of Columbia, the Contractor and/or any other persons or entities to perform, to inspect and document the work related to socket fusion installations, including the Tropical Avenue Project;
- d. The responsibilities of Columbia regarding required reports and documentation related to socket fusion installations;

- e. The existence of sufficient details and documentation regarding the installation, completion and inspection of each socket fusion by Columbia, the Contractor or any other person or entity;
- f. Whether Columbia required the Contractor or any other person or entity to inspect such socket fusion installations as well as details regarding the conduct, results and communication of such inspections;
- g. The responsibility of Columbia to supervise, oversee and/or inspect each such socket fusion installation;
- h. Sufficient details and records to establish whether Columbia and/or the Contractor performed the requisite duties and responsibilities regarding each such socket fusion installation;
- i. Whether the issues identified in the Tropical Avenue Project were isolated to that specific project;
- j. Whether inspections were conducted for each socket fusion, and if so, when and by whom each inspection was performed;
- k. The qualifications of each person conducting such socket fusion installation inspections;
- l. The results and identification of all documentation of such socket fusion installation inspections;

- m. Whether each socket fusion was personally inspected by Columbia, when and by whom such inspection was performed, and the results related to each such inspection;
- n. The identification of all requirements, including tariff provisions, that related to the inspections, supervision of work performed by third parties, and completion of such socket fusion installations;
- o. Documentation regarding the compliance or failure to comply with such identified requirements or tariff provisions;
- p. The identification of documentation and information related to the performance and results of “self-approved” socket fusion installations;
- q. When and why “self-approved” socket fusion installations occurred;
- r. The identification of documentation and information related to any safety inspections or investigations conducted by any Party or other person or entity related to the subject matter of the Complaint and all reports and results related to such inspections or investigations;
- s. The identification of documentation or information related to an inventory of all socket fusions utilized in or for the Tropical Avenue Project and all records related to the completion and inspection of such installations or attempted installations;

- t. Any other information or documentation that was identified or discovered by the Parties that supports the Settlement with substantial evidence;
- u. Any other information or documentation that was identified or discovered by the Parties that provides support that the Settlement is in the public interest.

Under the circumstances, the following Interim Order will be entered.

THEREFORE,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the evidentiary record at Docket No. C-2023-3044398 shall remain open and the Parties shall be provided with an opportunity to file: any appropriate and timely pleadings; a proposed stipulation of facts with citations to record evidence to be entered into the evidentiary record; a motion to admit evidence into the record to support a settlement; and an amended settlement with proposed stipulated facts.

2. Any additional filings pursuant to Ordering Paragraph 1 above shall address the issues raised above, to the extent necessary to ensure that substantial evidence exists to support a settlement by the Parties, which may include the appropriateness and a factual basis to consider any appropriate remedial action or civil penalty and any other relief proposed by the Parties.

3. That in the event that no additional filings are made by the Parties within 90 days of the date of this Order, on or before February 1, 2026, a status report shall be provided to the undersigned presiding officer by all parties to this proceeding addressing the issues raised in this Interim Order, as well as all dates in which the Parties and their witnesses are available to conduct a four day in-person evidentiary hearing in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in March of 2026

in order to establish an evidentiary record in this proceeding. In addition, a prehearing conference may be requested by any party to this proceeding.

Date: October 17, 2025

/s/
Jeffrey A. Watson
Administrative Law Judge

C-2023-3044398 – PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION & ENFORCEMENT v. COLUMBIA GAS OF PENNSYLVANIA INC

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