

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

William Wehrle	)	
	)	
v.	)	Case No. GC-2013-0361
	)	
Laclede Gas Company,	)	
Respondent.	)	

**LACLEDE GAS COMPANY’S ANSWER TO COMPLAINT**

**COMES NOW** Laclede Gas Company (“Laclede” or “Company”), pursuant to the Commission’s January 22, 2013 Notice of Complaint in the above captioned case, and submits its Answer to the Complaint filed against Laclede by William Wehrle (“Mr. Wehrle” or the “Customer”). In support thereof, Laclede states as follows:

1. In his complaint, Mr. Wehrle alleged the following: That, at Laclede’s request, he had made an appointment for Laclede to change its meter at his home; that while Mr. Wehrle was at Wal-Mart, a Laclede service technician came to his house at 10:30pm, without first calling as Mr. Wehrle had requested; that the Laclede technician convinced Mr. Wehrle’s “young son” to allow him to perform the service work; that the Laclede technician entered his home and turned off the gas service; that Mr. Wehrle came home and asked why the technician showed up in the middle of the night without calling first; that the technician refused to speak with him and called the police when Mr. Wehrle refused to let the technician access his home or property; that two police squad cars and a fire truck were dispatched to his home; that the Laclede technician completed the meter change, but in doing so the technician erred by allowing gas pressure to Mr. Wehrle’s furnace to increase by 60%; that Mr. Wehrle called Laclede Gas, which sent another technician to his home; that the second technician did not leave until after 12 midnight.

Mr. Wehrle also alleges that someone stepped on and broke his garden hose, although he does not specify who. Mr. Wehrle concludes that Laclede should buy him a new furnace.

2. Mr. Wehrle's complaint has four numbered allegations, to which Laclede will respond.

3. In response to allegation #1, Laclede admits that it mailed a notice to Mr. Wehrle seeking to replace the meter located at Mr. Wehrle's home.

4. In response to allegation #2, Laclede admits that Mr. Wehrle responded to Laclede's request to perform the meter change.

5. In response to allegation #3, Laclede admits that on January 11, 2013, it set up an appointment with Mr. Wehrle for January 16, and that Laclede noted that Mr. Wehrle requested that Laclede call him in advance of arrival.

6. In response to allegation #4, Laclede denies that it arrived at Mr. Wehrle's home at 10:30 pm without calling first. Laclede states that due to a large workload on January 16, Laclede's service technician did not finish his last job before the Wehrle appointment until around 7pm. The technician was sensitive to the late hour, but felt that because the customer had made an appointment for that day, he could not end his shift without attempting to keep the appointment. The technician therefore called the Wehrle home, as Mr. Wehrle had requested. The technician placed his call using a cell phone that does not send a phone number to the called phone. He uses that type of phone because Laclede wants to encourage customers who need assistance to call the central dispatch number (314-621-6960), rather than calling a technician directly. Unfortunately, Mr. Wehrle appears to have a service that blocks calls that do not contain the caller's phone number, so the technician's call could not go through to Mr. Wehrle's phone.

Again, because Mr. Wehrle had set up an appointment, the technician proceeded to the Wehrle home even though he was not able to complete the advance call he had placed.

7. The technician arrived at the Wehrle's home at about 7:30pm, not 10:30pm. As stated by Mr. Wehrle, he was not home at that time. Laclede has no reason to doubt that Mr. Wehrle was at Wal-Mart, as he alleged. At the Wehrle home, Mr. Wehrle's son answered the door. Mr. Wehrle's son is a young adult who is approximately 21 years of age. The Laclede technician apologized for his late arrival, explained that he had an appointment to change the meter, which he was prepared to do, but given the late hour (7:30), the technician offered that if the Wehrles did not want the meter changed at that time, Laclede would be glad to reschedule the appointment. The young man indicated that he was aware that an appointment had been made, that they had been expecting someone from Laclede, and that if the technician wanted to do the job, he was welcome to proceed.

8. The Laclede technician then turned off the gas appliances in the home, got his tools from his truck and began the meter change process. At about 7:45pm, Mr. Wehrle arrived and demanded to know why the Laclede technician had not called first. The technician tried to explain that he had attempted to call, but Mr. Wehrle became upset and ordered him off of the property. The technician complied and moved out to the street. Mr. Wehrle then took the technician's tool box, which was sitting by the meter, and brought the tool box into his home.

9. Mr. Wehrle announced to the Laclede technician that he was calling the police. The technician then phoned his own supervisor, who called Laclede dispatch,

who also called the police as a precaution to protect our employee. Thus, as Mr. Wehrle noted in his complaint, two police squad cars arrived at his house.

10. As Mr. Wehrle continued to be upset, the police, rather than Laclede personnel, spoke to him about the situation. The police asked Mr. Wehrle to permit Laclede's technician to complete the meter change so that service could be restored. Mr. Wehrle refused, so the police called the fire department to see if the fire department would declare the property to be a hazard since it was without gas service. The police explained that if the property was declared a hazard, the police could authorize Laclede personnel to go onto the property to complete the meter change and restore gas service. The police also directed Mr. Wehrle to return the technician's tool box.

11. Finally, Mr. Wehrle's older son arrived. He is about 30 years old. He was able to defuse the situation and with his approval, Laclede's technician finished the job, and left the property at approximately 9:30pm.

12. Sometime after 10pm that night, Mr. Wehrle called Laclede's call center. He was still upset, and indicated that he smelled an odor at the furnace. Laclede sent a different service technician to the home, who confirmed that there was no gas odor. Mr. Wehrle complained that the gas pressure in the house was too high, and cited a hot vent pipe as evidence. The service technician explained that it is normal for a single-wall vent pipe to be hot, and that the furnace is working properly, except it did need to be cleaned and have normal maintenance service.

13. The technician then tested the regulator back behind the meter and found the pressure to be normal while gas service was flowing. He also tested the pressure while the gas service was off, and found it to be slightly elevated. This would not have

caused a problem for Mr. Wehrle, as the pressure was normal during operation. Nevertheless, the Laclede technician thought it best to change the regulator and rebuild the meter set. He completed his work at about 12:30am and departed. Mr. Wehrle was satisfied with this result. Nevertheless, he filed a formal complaint the next day, January 17, bypassing the informal complaint process.

14. With respect to the garden hose, Laclede denies that its service technician stepped on or broke the garden hose. Between the police department, the fire department, and Mr. Wehrle's family members, any one of a fair number of people could have caused that alleged damage.

15. Laclede denies any and all other allegations in the complaint not specifically admitted herein.

16. In conclusion, Laclede regrets the circumstances that led to Mr. Wehrle's dissatisfaction and his filing of the complaint. A busy day for Laclede service technicians led to a late arrival, Mr. Wehrle's call blocking service prevented an advanced call, and the good nature of his 21 year old son resulted in the Laclede technician commencing the meter change rather than rescheduling. Nevertheless, Laclede did not violate any statutes, tariffs, or Commission rules, and is not responsible for buying Mr. Wehrle a new furnace.

17. However, if Mr. Wehrle chooses to replace his current furnace with a high efficiency furnace, Laclede can grant him a rebate of at least \$200 under its energy efficiency program. Alternatively, Mr. Wehrle may be able to obtain financing for a high efficiency furnace through the Company's EnergyWise Dealer Program.

WHEREFORE, Laclede respectfully requests that the Commission accept Laclede's Answer and find that the Company has violated no laws, or rules, decisions or orders of the Commission in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

**/s/ Rick Zucker**

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**Certificate of Service**

The undersigned certifies that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Answer was served on the Complainant, the General Counsel of the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission, and the Office of Public Counsel on this 21st day of February, 2013 by United States mail, hand-delivery, email, or facsimile.

**/s/ Marcia Spangler**