

**THE CITY OF OKLAHOMA CITY  
OFFICE OF  
THE MUNICIPAL COUNSELOR**

Council Agenda  
Item No. IX. CP  
8/16/2022

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Kenneth Jordan  
Municipal Counselor

Resolution authorizing the Municipal Counselor to waive service of process and to confess judgment without admission of liability in the amount of \$4,781.86 and all the costs of the action in the Oklahoma County District Court in the claim filed by Cox Communications c/o TCC.

Claimant's address:  
PO Box 47604  
Minneapolis, MN 55447

This office acknowledges receipt of a claim from the above-referenced claimant in which claimant alleges that on March 16, 2022, claimant's buried cable was damaged during a City crew's work repairing a water line near 6800 North Lake Front Drive in Warr Acres. Claimant alleges damages in the amount of \$4,781.86, the cost of repairing the cable. Claimant has provided documentation in support of this amount.

Section 153(A) of the Governmental Tort Claims Act provides:

- A. The state or a political subdivision shall be liable for loss resulting from its torts or the torts of its employees acting within the scope of their employment subject to the limitations and exceptions specified in this act and only where the state or political subdivision, if a private person or entity, would be liable for money damages under the laws of this state. The state or a political subdivision shall not be liable under the provisions of this act for any act or omission of an employee acting outside the scope of his employment.

51 O.S. 2018 Supp. §153(A).

The State of Oklahoma has promulgated the Underground Facilities Damage Prevention Act (UFDPA), 63 O.S. §§142.1-142.11, to govern excavations done on or near the location of any underground facility. The UFDPA purports to set out the duties of the facilities owners and those who would excavate around underground facilities. The Act requires:

Before an excavator shall demolish a structure, discharge any explosive or commence to excavate in a highway, street, alley or other public ground or way, on or near the location of an operator's underground facilities, or a private easement, such excavator shall first notify all operators . . . to determine whether any operators

have underground facilities in or near the proposed area of excavation or demolition; . . . . Such notice shall be given no more than ten (10) days nor less than forty-eight (48) hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, prior to the commencement of the excavation or demolition.

63 O.S. 2011 §142.6(A). Section 142.7 goes on to provide:

- A. Except as provided in subsection B of this section, powered or mechanized equipment shall not be used directly over marked routes of underground facilities until the precise location of the underground facilities has been determined by the excavator, and then only after the facilities have been exposed and properly protected to avoid damage to them. If the precise location of the underground facilities cannot be determined by the excavator, the operator thereof shall be notified by the excavator so that the operator can determine the precise location of the underground facilities prior to continuing excavation or demolition.

63 O.S. 2011 §142.7(A).

In any case where excavation is done around underground facilities, whether or not the operator of those facilities has been asked to locate their facilities, the excavator must exercise reasonable care to prevent damage to those underground facilities.

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51 O.S. 2011 §153(A).

According to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, a prima facie case of negligence is established by showing the following: "(1) a duty owed by the defendant to protect the plaintiff from injury, (2) a failure to properly exercise or perform that duty and (3) the plaintiff's injuries are proximately caused by the defendant's failure to exercise his duty of care." *McKellips v. Saint Francis Hospital, Inc.*, 741 P.2d 467, 470 (Okla. 1987) (citations omitted).

Proximate cause has two components - legal causation and cause in fact. *Id.* Cause in fact is determined by the "but for" test: "The defendant's conduct is a cause of the event if the event would not have occurred but for that conduct." *Id.* (citations omitted). "Proximate cause" is also a synonym for "legal cause." BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY, 1225 (6th Ed. 1990). To clarify this issue,

the Oklahoma Supreme Court has further defined proximate cause: "The proximate cause of an event must be that which in a natural and continuous sequence, unbroken by an independent cause, produces the event and without which the event would not have occurred." *Gaines v. Providence Apartments*, 750 P.2d 125, 126-27 (Okla. 1987) (citations omitted).

This office is in receipt of information from the Line Maintenance Division of the Utilities Department regarding this incident. This information shows that City Line Maintenance personnel cut a Cox cable while working near 6800 North Lake Front Drive in Warr Acres in March of 2022. It appears that the cable had been properly located. It appears that, although the location of the incident is outside of the corporate limits of the City of Oklahoma City, Utilities Line Maintenance crews were responsible for the damage.

Based on the above information and applicable Oklahoma law, it is the opinion of this office that this claim should be approved in the amount of \$4,781.86, and that the Municipal Counselor should be authorized to confess judgment without admission of liability in that amount and all costs of the action in the District Court. If Council agrees, a Resolution to that effect has been prepared.