

**RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL
HEARINGS SECTION**

OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 06-0243718

ENFORCEMENT ACTION FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY THE NEWTON CORP. (608609), AS TO THE STRAGO-HARRELSON (12814) LEASE, WELL NO. 1, DAVY CROCKETT, NE (GLENROSE) FIELD, HOUSTON COUNTY, TEXAS

FINAL ORDER

The Commission finds that after statutory notice the captioned enforcement proceeding was heard by the examiner on November 3, 2005, and that the respondent, The Newton Corp. (608609), failed to appear or respond to the notice. Pursuant to § 1.49 of the Commission's General Rules of Practice and Procedure [Tex. R. R. Comm'n, 16 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 1.49] and after being duly submitted to the Railroad Commission of Texas at conference held in its offices in Austin, Texas, the Commission makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Newton Corp. (608609), ("Respondent") was given Notice of Opportunity for Hearing by certified mail, addressed to the most recent P-5 address on the Form P-5 Organization Report, which was signed and returned to the Commission.
2. The returned certified receipt containing the Original Complaint and the Notice of Opportunity for Hearing mailed to Respondent's most recent P-5 address was signed and returned to the Commission on August 30, 2005. The certified receipt has been on file with the Commission for 15 days, exclusive of the day of receipt and day of issuance.
3. On June 9, 2004, Respondent, A Corporation, filed an Organization Report (Form P-5) with the Commission reporting that its officers consisted of the following individual(s): Pete Spiros; President.
4. Pete Spiros, was a person in a position of ownership or control of respondent, as defined by Texas Natural Resources Code Section 91.114, during the time period of the violations of Commission rules committed by respondent.
5. The violations of Commission rules committed by respondent are related to safety and the

control of pollution.

6. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of Well No. 1 on the Strago-Harrelson (12814) Lease ("subject well"/"subject lease") by filing a P-4 Form (Producer's Transportation Authority and Certificate of Compliance) with the Commission effective on December 1, 1999.
7. According to Commission records the Respondent's Form P-5 (Organization Report) became delinquent on February 1, 2005. Respondent had a \$50,000.00 Letter of Credit as its financial assurance at the time of its last P-5 renewal.
8. The subject well ceased production on or before August 2003.
9. The subject well has not been properly plugged in accordance with, and is not otherwise in compliance with, Statewide Rule 14.
10. Usable quality groundwater in the area is likely to be contaminated by migrations or discharges of saltwater and other oil and gas wastes from the subject well. Unplugged wellbores constitute a cognizable threat to the public health and safety because of the probability of pollution.
11. The estimated cost to the State of plugging the subject well is \$41,000.00.
12. Commission district office inspections were conducted on September 7, 2004, September 28, 2004, October 25, 2004, December 8, 2004, February 10, 2005, March 7, 2005 and April 12, 2005 for the Strago-Harrelson (12814) Lease. The firewall was almost full to capacity with approximately one barrel of heavy oil skim covering approximately 95% of the area. Also, oil saturated soil was found in an 8' radius around the wellhead of Well No. 1. Respondent failed to remove the oil from the firewall and clean up the oil-saturated soil from around the wellhead.
13. No permit has been issued to Respondent for the discharge of oil and gas wastes on or from the subject lease.
14. The unpermitted discharge of oil and gas wastes or other substances or materials on the subject lease constitute a hazard to public health and safety because leaks and spills of oil and produced waters onto soils can migrate into surface water bodies causing contamination or can leach into the ground and percolate through soils into groundwater supplies.
15. The Respondent has not demonstrated good faith since it failed to plug or otherwise place the subject leases and subject wells in compliance after being notified of the violations by the District Office and failed to appear at the hearing to explain its inaction.
16. Respondent has a prior history of Commission rule violations including the following docket(s):

Docket No. 06-0236924, Statewide Rule 14; Final Order Served: January 26, 2005 and;
Docket No. 08-0238073; Statewide Rules 8 and 14; Final Order Served: April 26, 2005.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Proper notice was issued by the Railroad Commission to respondent and to all other appropriate persons legally entitled to notice.
2. All things necessary to the Commission attaining jurisdiction over the subject matter and the parties in this hearing have been performed or have occurred.
3. Respondent is in violation of Commission Statewide Rules 8(d)(1) and 14(b)(2).
4. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject leases in compliance with Statewide Rule 8(d)(1), which prohibits the discharge of oil and gas wastes without a permit.
5. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease and subject wells in compliance with all applicable Commission rules according to Statewide Rules 14, 58, and 79 and Chapters 89 and 91 of the Texas Natural Resources Code.
6. The documented violations committed by the respondent constitute acts deemed serious, a hazard to the public health, and demonstrate a lack of good faith pursuant to TEX. NAT. RES. CODE ANN. §81.0531(c).
7. As a person in a position of ownership or control of respondent at the time respondent violated Commission rules related to safety and the control of pollution, Pete Spiros, and any other organization in which he may hold a position of ownership or control, shall be subject to the restrictions of Texas Natural Resource Code Section 91.114(a)(2) for a period of no more than seven years from the date the order entered in this matter becomes final, or until the conditions that constituted the violations herein are corrected or are being corrected in accordance with a schedule to which the Commission and the organization have agreed; and all administrative, civil, and criminal penalties and all cleanup and plugging costs incurred by the State relating to those conditions are paid or are being paid in accordance with a schedule to which the Commission and the organization have agreed, whichever is earlier.

IT IS ORDERED THAT within 30 days from the day immediately following the date this order becomes final:

1. The Newton Corp. (608609), shall plug or otherwise place the Strago-Harrelson (12814) Lease, Well No. 1, Davy Crockett, NE (Glenrose) Field, Houston County, Texas in compliance with applicable Commission rules and regulations; and
2. The Newton Corp. (608609), shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **SIX THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$6,000.00)**.

It is further **ORDERED** by the Commission that this order shall not be final and effective until 20 days after a party is notified of the Commission's order. A party is presumed to have been notified of the Commission's order three days after the date on which the notice is actually mailed. If a timely motion for rehearing is filed by any party at interest, this order shall not become final and effective until such motion is overruled, or if such motion is granted, this order shall be subject to further action by the Commission. Pursuant to TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.146(e), the time allotted for Commission action on a motion for rehearing in this case prior to its being overruled by operation of law, is hereby extended until 90 days from the date the parties are notified of the order.

All requested findings of fact and conclusions of law which are not expressly adopted herein are denied. All pending motions and requests for relief not previously granted or granted herein are denied.

Noncompliance with the provisions of this order is subject to enforcement by the Attorney General and subject to civil penalties of up to \$10,000.00 per day per violation.

Done this 24th day of January 2006.

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

(Signatures affixed by Default Master Order dated January 24, 2006)

JD/sa