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NEWS RELEASE

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PSC Fines Jackson Purchase Energy in Lineman Fatality ***\$20,000 penalty assessed for safety violations in January 2017 electrocution***

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 3, 2018) –The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) has fined Jackson Purchase Energy Corp. for safety violations that contributed to the January 2017 fatal electrocution of an employee of the electric distribution cooperative.

In an order issued today, the PSC said it found eight separate safety violations and assessed the maximum penalty of \$2,500 for each one. Jackson Purchase was ordered to pay the \$20,000 total penalty within 30 days.

Jackson Purchase lineman Joshua Franklin was fatally injured on Jan. 6, 2017, when he came into contact with a 7,200-volt line that he and another lineman had been sent to repair.

The violations cited by the PSC are related mostly to the failure of the Jackson Purchase employees to take safety precautions that are required when working on lines that are or may be energized.

Physical evidence from the scene of the accident and other information gathered by PSC investigators suggested that the employees assumed the line was not conducting electricity. However, the uninjured employee, who was the supervisor at the scene, stated that the repairs were begun with the assumption that the line was energized.

The supervisor also said that a safety device on the line indicated there was no power flowing through the line. In fact, a subsequent inspection of the safety device found that the device was faulty and was falsely indicating that the power was off when in fact it was not.

In assessing the contradictory evidence, the PSC found that the most likely explanation for the accident was that Franklin wrongly assumed that the line was not energized when he ascended in a bucket truck to begin making repairs.

The PSC concluded that Franklin did not test the line to make sure that it was not energized. Furthermore, the incorrect assumption led Franklin to forego the use of protective equipment, the PSC found. Thus, he did not comply with safety requirements.

“His failure to do so led to his tragic death,” the PSC said in today’s order.

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Jackson Purchase Energy is one of three electric distribution cooperatives that own and purchase power from Big Rivers Electric Corp. Jackson Purchase is based in Paducah and serves about 30,000 customers in six western Kentucky counties.

The PSC conducted an evidentiary hearing in the case on Aug. 15, 2017.

The video of that hearing, the PSC investigation report, and other records in the case are available on the PSC website, psc.ky.gov. The case number is 2017-00202.

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky.

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