

# Know Your Rights: Land Agents & Surveyors

Once a company initiates the process for a Hazardous Liquid Pipeline, landowners will begin receiving a multitude of calls, emails and letters from the pipeline company. It is important to know your rights and the law so the pipeline company cannot take advantage of you.

The most important thing to know is that **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO SIGN A VOLUNTARY EASEMENT** and we encourage you not to sign. Do not let anyone pressure you to sign something that you do not understand or that you don't want to sign. If you sign an easement and if we successfully stop these pipelines, you may still have an easement on your land that you will need to get out of.

There are two types of pipeline representatives that will be contacting you: Surveyors & Land Agents.

## Surveyors:

- Want to survey the land to look for land features, use, endangered species, Native artifacts and more
- Landowner can refuse surveys, but
- Iowa law states that with *proper* 10-day restricted certified notice surveyors can access the land (read more below)
- Surveyors cannot do surveys before the informational meeting is held in the county

## Land Agents:

- Pressure landowners to sign easements
- You have no obligation to speak with land agents and you do not have to let them onto your land
- Pipeline companies CANNOT discuss easements until after the informational meeting is held in the county

## What the law says about Land Agents/Voluntary Easements in [Chapter 479b](#):

6. A pipeline company seeking rights under [this chapter](#) shall not negotiate or purchase an easement or other interest in land in a county known to be affected by the proposed project prior to the informational meeting.

## What are your rights for Land Agents/Easements:

- You do not have to speak or communicate with or allow a land agent onto your property.
- You DO NOT have to sign an easement.
- If you sign an easement, you have 7 days to rescind your decision (excluding Saturdays & Sundays) in writing via certified mail to the pipeline company (Chapter 479B.24)
- A voluntary easement is forever. If the pipeline projects are not approved, you will still have an easement on your land.
- There is NO rush to sign anything. The pipeline company cannot use eminent domain until their general permit is approved. The IUB process takes many months or years and the permit may or may not be approved.

## What the law says about Surveys/Surveyors in [Chapter 479B.15](#)

### **479B.15 Entry for land surveys.**

After the informational meeting or after the filing of a petition if no informational meeting is required, a pipeline company may enter upon private land for the purpose of surveying and examining the land to determine direction or depth of pipelines by giving ten days' written notice by restricted certified mail to the landowner as defined in [section 479B.4](#) and to any person residing on or in possession of the land. The entry for land surveys shall not be deemed a trespass and may be aided by injunction. The pipeline company shall pay the actual damages caused by the entry, survey, and examination.

## What are your rights for surveys?

- You can refuse the 10-day Restricted Certified Mail survey notice or not answer the door to sign for a mailing. Restricted Certified Mail must be signed by the person whose name is on the letter or a registered agent.
- You can request the pipeline company get an injunction from a Judge to survey.
- You can call your Sheriff ahead of time to ask for their support. Many County Sheriffs have been very supportive of landowner's rights and have helped stop a survey when the survey trucks showed up.
- If you have signed for the 10-day Restricted Certified Mail, the company can enter your land.
- You can follow the surveyor around to take pictures or video of their survey and ask questions about what they are looking for.
- Landowners are challenging Iowa's survey law. The case is pending in front of the Iowa Supreme Court.

## Bullying/Intimidation/Harassment Tactics:

Pipeline companies will say anything to get you to sign an easement because eminent domain condemnation hearings take a long time and cost a lot of money. That means land agents may use unethical or even illegal tactics to pressure you and your neighbors to sign. Examples of tactics to look out for. **Document every interaction you have with a Summit representative with time, date, and what was said.**

- "All of your neighbors have signed so you should too"
- "This is a done deal so you better sign now"
- "The first people to sign get the most money or this is the highest offer you'll get"
- Calling you over and over again when you've already said no
- Targeting elderly people or other people that may be more vulnerable to pressure

## What to do if you experience bullying, intimidation, harassment or anything else that feels unethical, immoral or illegal:

- File a complaint with the Iowa Utilities Board by emailing [customer@iub.iowa.gov](mailto:customer@iub.iowa.gov). Document the date, time, phone number, and what happened. Ask the IUB to open an investigation into your complaint.
- File an objection with the Iowa Utilities Board by submitting your comment at <https://iub.iowa.gov/online-services/open-docket-comment-form>.
- Contact your Supervisors, County Sheriff, local press, neighbors, and others what you are experiencing.