

Know Your Rights: Land Agents, Surveyors, and Easements

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 will 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
- Landowner can refuse surveys to delay, but
- Iowa law states that with proper 10-day restricted certified notice surveyors can access the land
- Surveyors cannot do surveys before the informational hearing is complete

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 the meeting in the county is complete

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 (479B.24)
- If you sign an easement and if we successfully stop the pipelines, you will need to get a lawyer to get out of the voluntary easement you signed.
- There is NO rush to sign anything. The pipeline company cannot use eminent domain until their general permit is approved, which may (or may not) happen in early 2023.
- You may get a better deal through the condemnation proceedings than you would with an easement because the terms and payment amounts will be determined by your peers.

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 a survey or even ignore their phone calls but with PROPER 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.
- You can ask questions about what they are looking for.
- You can refuse the 10-day Restricted Certified Mail but eventually they may get a court order to do a survey of your land.

Bullying/Intimidation/Harassment Tactics:

Pipeline companies want you to sign a voluntary easement because it helps make their case that they have community support and because 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:

- "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" (that's not true)
- 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. 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>.
- Tell your Supervisors, County Sheriff, local press, neighbors, and others what you are experiencing.

The more of us that refuse to sign easements, the better chance we have at stopping these pipelines.