

478.15 Eminent domain — procedure — entering on land — reversion on nonuse.

1. Any person, company, or corporation having secured a franchise as provided in [this chapter](#) shall thereupon be vested with the right of eminent domain to such extent as the utilities commission may approve, prescribe, and find to be necessary for public use, not exceeding one hundred feet in width for right-of-way and not exceeding one hundred sixty acres in any one location, in addition to right-of-way, for the location of electric substations to carry out the purposes of said franchise; provided, however, that where two hundred kilovolt lines or higher voltage lines are to be constructed, the person, company, or corporation may apply to the commission for a wider right-of-way not to exceed two hundred feet, and the commission may for good cause extend the width of such right-of-way for such lines to the person, company, or corporation applying for the same. The burden of proving the necessity for public use shall be on the person, company, or corporation seeking the franchise. A homestead site, cemetery, orchard, or schoolhouse location shall not be condemned for the purpose of erecting an electric substation. If agreement cannot be made with the private owner of lands as to damages caused by the construction of said transmission line, or electric substations, the same proceedings shall be taken as provided for taking private property for works of internal improvement.

2. Any person, company, or corporation proposing to construct a transmission line or other facility that involves the taking of property under the right of eminent domain and desiring to enter upon the land, which it proposes to appropriate, for the purpose of examining or surveying the same, shall first file with the utilities commission a written statement under oath setting forth the proposed routing of the line or facility including a description of the lands to be crossed, the names and addresses of owners, together with request that a permit be issued by the commission authorizing the person, company, or corporation or its duly appointed representative to enter upon the land for the purpose of examining and surveying and to take and use on the land any vehicle and surveying equipment necessary in making the survey. The commission shall within ten days after the request issue a permit, accompanied by such bond in such amount as the commission shall approve, to the person, company, or corporation making the application, if in the commission's opinion the application is made in good faith and not for the purpose of harassing the owner of the land. If the commission is of the opinion that the application is not made in good faith or made for the purpose of harassment to the owner of the land, the commission shall set the matter for hearing. The matter shall be heard not more than twenty days after filing the application. Notice of the time and place of hearing shall be given by the commission, to the owner of the land by registered mail with a return receipt requested, not less than ten days preceding the date of hearing.

3. Any person, company, or corporation that has obtained a permit in the manner prescribed in [this section](#) may enter upon the land or lands, as provided in [this section](#), and shall be liable for actual damages sustained in connection with such entry. An action in damages shall be the exclusive remedy.

4. If an electric transmission line right-of-way, or any part thereof, is wholly abandoned for public utility purposes by the relocation of the transmission lines, is not used or operated for a period of five years, or if its construction has been commenced and work has ceased and has not in good faith been resumed for five years, the right-of-way shall revert to the person or persons who, at the time of the abandonment or reversion, are the owners of the tract from which the right-of-way was taken. Following such abandonment of right-of-way, the owner or holder of purported fee title to the real estate may serve notice upon the owner of the right-of-way easement, or the owner's successor in interest, and upon any party in possession of the real estate, a written notice which shall accurately describe the real estate in question, set out the facts concerning ownership of the fee, ownership of the right-of-way easement, and the period of abandonment, and notify the parties that such reversion shall be complete and final, and that the easement or other right shall be forfeited, unless the parties shall, within one hundred twenty days after the completed service of notice, file an affidavit with the county recorder of the county in which the real estate is located disputing the facts contained in the notice.

5. The notice shall be served in the same manner as an original notice under the Iowa rules of civil procedure, except that when notice is served by publication no affidavit therefor shall be required before publication. If no affidavit disputing the facts contained in the notice is filed within one hundred twenty days, the party serving the notice may file for record in the office of the county recorder a copy of the notice with proofs of service attached thereto or endorsed thereon, and when so recorded, the record shall be constructive notice to all persons of the abandonment, reversion, and forfeiture of the right-of-way.

[S13, §2120-q; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §8322; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, §489.14; C66, 71, 73, 75, §489.15; C77, 79, 81, §478.15]

[2015 Acts, ch 30, §155](#); [2022 Acts, ch 1032, §74](#); [2024 Acts, ch 1170, §369](#)

Condemnation procedure, [chapter 6B](#)

Code editor directive applied