



Texas company wins \$134M from Utah utility owner PacifiCorp

By Steven Oberbeck | The Salt Lake Tribune
First Published 1 minute ago • Updated 1 minute ago

A Salt Lake City jury has awarded a Texas company a \$134 million judgment against PacifiCorp, which does business in Utah as Rocky Mountain Power, for pilfering trades secrets that it used to concoct its own winning bid for the Currant Creek power plant near Mona.

USA Power of Dallas was awarded \$21.3 million in damages against PacifiCorp for stealing the company's trade secrets and breaching a confidentiality agreement. The jury also awarded another \$112.5 million in damages due to PacifiCorp unjustly profiting from the theft.



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The verdict came late Monday evening after a five-week trial, said Peggy Tomsic, a Salt Lake City attorney who represented USA Power. "It was a grueling process but the jury was attentive throughout. They took notes and paid close attention to the evidence."

Michele Beck, who oversees the Committee of Consumer Services that serves as the voice for residential and small-business owners in utility rate cases, doubts that PacifiCorp will be able to pass on the cost of the judgment to customers.

"I don't believe it would be allowed [by Utah's utility regulators]," Beck said. "And even if they were to try, it is something that we would vigorously oppose."

In 2002, USA Power, through its Spring Canyon Energy subsidiary, approached PacifiCorp about building a natural gas-fired power plant in Juab County. Once the plant was built, USA planned to sell it to PacifiCorp.

As part of the negotiations, USA Power required PacifiCorp to sign a nondisclosure pact before it would allow the utility to review the inside design and engineering details for its proposed Spring Canyon plant.

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