
North Dakota regulators vote to drop coal mining complaint

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AP reported that North Dakota regulators voted to drop a complaint against Falkirk Mining Company for illegally removing topsoil to build a road in an area where the company plans to begin digging coal.

State Public Service Commission inspectors had recommended USD 350 fine against Falkirk for the incident. The commission voted 2-1 to drop the case with Commissioners Mr Kevin Cramer and Mr Brian Kalk concluding no state coal mining rules had been broken.

Commissioner Mr Tony Clark did not want to drop the case. He said that the company violated mining rules even if it did not deserve a fine.

Mr Clark said that "I think everyone in this case agrees that this was a minor violation but nonetheless it was a violation. The staff contends it, the law supports it and even the company admits that it was a violation of the rules that we have."

Falkirk operates the Falkirk Mine in McLean County in west central North Dakota. It supplies coal to Great River Energy's Coal Creek power station near Underwood.

The incident occurred last May, when a heavy equipment operator began scraping soil from a patch of ground that was not yet approved for coal mining. The error was discovered the same day and the company replaced the topsoil, commission filings indicate. The land was approved for mining in June.

Mr Cramer said that the company reported the violation itself and corrected it. Penalizing Falkirk in the case would discourage companies from reporting minor infractions. He said that "This incident very well could have been covered up and no violation ever discovered."

(Sourced from Associated Press)

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