

OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

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District Attorney



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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

RE: *People of the State of California v. Golden Valley Transfer, Case No 22CV00032 & People of the State of California v. Jesse Villasana, Case No. 21CR01636*

District Attorney Settles Cases Related to March 2020 Cuyama Oil Spill

District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today that the Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit of the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office has settled two cases related to a March 21, 2020 oil spill that released 4,533 gallons of oil in the Cuyama River. The spill occurred when the driver of an oil tanker truck, traveling from Bakersfield to Santa Maria, drove at an unsafe speed, causing the oil tank to detach from the truck, and roll down an embankment into the river.

The driver of the truck, Jesse Villasana, pled to a misdemeanor violation of Fish and Game Code section 5650(a)(1), for unlawfully depositing oil into a waterway of the State, and to a violation of Vehicle Code section 22350, for driving at an unsafe speed. As a result of these charges, Villasana was sentenced to a year of probation, he is required to perform 20 hours of community work service at an environmental nonprofit, and he will pay a \$515 fine to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife ("CDFW").

The Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit and CDFW also settled a civil case with Golden Valley Transfer, Inc. ("GVT"), the crude oil transportation company that employed Mr. Villasana. As part of the stipulated resolution in that case, GVT is permanently enjoined from violating Fish and Game Code section 5650(a)(1) and Chapter 7.4 of Division 1, Title 2 of the Government Code (the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act). In addition, when transporting crude oil in locations without reliable cellular service, GVT will be required to carry a device with the technological means to immediately report crude oil or hazardous materials releases.

GVT has already reimbursed CDFW for \$314,320 in costs associated with the clean-up of the spill. However, as part of the judgment, GVT has agreed to pay \$111,326 to CDFW to remediate natural resource damages. Furthermore, the company will pay \$88,674 in civil penalties as follows:

- \$63,674 under Government Code section 8670.66(a); \$15,919 of which will be paid to the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office, and \$47,755 of which will be paid to CDFW's Environmental Enhancement Fund
- \$25,000 under Business and Professions Code section 17206, payable to the County of Santa Barbara

GVT was cooperative with CDFW and the District Attorney's Office throughout the investigation.

District Attorney Dudley stated, "My office is committed to protecting Santa Barbara County's abundant natural resources. I appreciate Golden Valley Transfer's cooperation in remediating the damage caused by this oil spill, and I hope this case serves as a reminder that all companies handling hazardous materials must act with caution to protect the public and the environment."

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