# **Activists, Kern officials agree on need to address leaky oil wells**

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**Body**

Jun. 22—Local government should be doing more, environmental justice advocates said at this week's Board of Supervisors meeting, to help address leaky ***oil*** wells in Arvin, Lamont and Weedpatch.

Representatives of two activist groups called on county officials to work with state regulators, or at least write a letter emphasizing the urgency of the situation, to stop methane emissions at a series of wells found last month to have been leaking the gas for an unknown duration.

"We ask that ***Kern*** County work with CalGEM (the state Geologic Energy Management Division) to make sure that all the leaky wells are fixed in an efficient and quick manner to make sure that residents are safe," Sandra Plascencia, a policy advocate for Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability, said at Tuesday's board meeting.

Concerns were raised earlier this month after inspections by a state task force including CalGEM found 27 ***oil*** well sites in the Arvin-Lamont area were leaking methane. Such emissions can contaminate water supplies, present public health risks and, depending how well vented they are, potentially ignite.

The leaks were located within 1,000 to 3,200 feet of homes and schools, prompting worries the emissions may have contributed to health problems among some local residents.

"Residents have expressed deep concerns over the leaking or potentially leaking wells in their area," Plascencia said. "They share that their children often experience headaches and nosebleeds, which tend to be side effects of emissions from leaking wells."

Plascencia pointed to Fuller Acres, a community near Arvin and Lamont that lies not far from an ***oil*** refinery, a dairy farm and cars whizzing by along Weedpatch Highway.

"They are right across the street from a refinery that emits black smoke flares and occasionally loud noises," she said. "There's no alert system, so sometimes when folks see smoke and hear loud noises, they don't know what to do and get scared."

So far, 16 of the wells have reportedly been fixed by their operators. But a representative of Los Gatos-based Sunray Petroleum Inc., owner of 11 of the leaky wells, has said it is not responsible for repairing the remaining leaks.

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