# **Some oil field violations linger for years in Kern**

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**Body**

Jun. 24—Serious ***oil*** field violations flagged as many as four years ago by state regulators in ***Kern*** County remain unresolved, according to a new analysis of publicly available data that raises questions about California's commitment or ability to address leaky wells and other problems of concern to local communities.

Data posted by the California Geologic Energy Management Division shows 14 violations cited by the agency in 2019 — petroleum leaks, spills, unauthorized releases and the like — are still active. Forty-nine more remain unsettled since 2020, along with 88 from 2021, an analysis by Los Angeles-based CJM Petroleum Consulting Inc. indicates.

The totals do not include lesser citations for things like missing signage. Counting those, CJM found, the county total from 2019 alone rises to 223, excluding violations attributed to ***oil*** field operators that are either bankrupt or inactive.

Industry representatives emphasize that violations are the exception for ***oil*** field operators that, as a whole, work closely with regulators to resolve leaks and other problems.

But the data is a reminder of difficulties the state faces in ensuring compliance about a month after state and regional inspectors found methane leaking from 27 ***oil*** wells in the Arvin-Lamont area, or 40% of those tested.

About half those leaks were repaired by their operators almost immediately. To address the rest, CalGEM issued notices of violations to two companies deemed responsible for wells that continued to emit methane, one of which has reportedly fixed both its leaks. The other, Los Gatos-based Sunray Petroleum Inc., has denied responsibility for the facilities because it no longer owns them, even as CalGEM insists the company is not relieved of its responsibility for them "until the wells are safely plugged and sealed to protect public health and the environment."

Assemblywoman Jasmeet Bains, D-Bakersfield, raised concern about the well leaks earlier this month, telling Gov. Gavin Newsom in a June 9 letter their repair must become top priority for the sake of local residents worried about health and safety implications.

She said by email Friday that notices of violations issued by CalGEM "are only useful if they cause violations to be corrected."

"There are good actors and bad actors in every industry," Bains wrote, adding, "The bad actors are dragging their feet, refusing to take responsibility, and making excuse after excuse."

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