OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

JOYCE E. DUDLEY
District Attorney

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Joyce E. Dudley
APPROVED BY JOYCE E. DUDLEY, DISTRICT ATTORNEY
Christopher Dalbey, Deputy District Attorney
CONTACT (805) 568-2436

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Gas Station Owner Settles Environmental Violations with the District Attorney

Leak Detection Sensors at Gas Station Were Disabled

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today the resolution of a civil action against Saleem Patel, owner and operator of Spirit Gasoline in Santa Maria. District Attorney Dudley filed the action in the Cook Division of the Santa Barbara County Superior Court, Case No. 19CV03489.

In March 2018, inspectors from the Santa Barbara County Certified Unified Program Agency ("CUPA")—a division of Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services—discovered that multiple leak-detection sensors in the underground fuel tank system at Spirit Gasoline had been elevated. In an elevated position the sensors were incapable of detecting a fuel leak at the earliest possible opportunity, as the law requires.

Mr. Patel cooperated with the authorities, including by performing equipment upgrades at Spirit Gasoline and another station he owns in Lompoc. To resolve the civil action, Mr. Patel stipulated to the entry of Final Judgment, which includes the following provisions:

- $15,000 in civil penalties.
  - $7,500 to Santa Barbara County.
  - $7,500 to the CUPA.
- $1,710 to the CUPA as reimbursement for investigation and enforcement costs.
- Injunction against Mr. Patel making it easier to enforce future compliance with the Health and Safety Code.

District Attorney Dudley said, "These violations threatened our health and environment, as undetected fuel leaks can pollute our groundwater and are very expensive and time-consuming to clean up. We are grateful that the CUPA discovered the elevated sensors, and that Mr. Patel has taken the necessary steps to come into compliance with the law."

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