

# Santa Barbara Independent INDEPENDENT.COM

## Plains All American Indicted in Refugio Oil Spill

May 17, 2016

By Kelsey Brugger

Two days before the one-year anniversary of last May's Refugio Oil Spill, Plains All American Pipeline and one of its employees has been indicted on criminal charges, according to the oil company.

On May 19, 2015, the now-infamous Line 901 ruptured and spilled an estimated 142,000 gallons of viscous crude oil, with about 20,000 gallons reaching the Pacific Ocean.

The charges are expected to be announced Tuesday at 11 a.m. at the Santa Barbara District Attorney's Offices by California Attorney General Kamala Harris and DA Joyce Dudley.

Plains executives said in a press release the indictment includes 46 counts. Of those, the company said, 10 are related to the release of crude oil or reporting the release to federal and state response centers.



The rest are related to the wildlife killed in the spill. State wildlife workers collected 202 dead birds and 99 dead mammals after the spill; 69 animals were collected and later freed.

Plains executives objected in a statement to the criminal charges, saying they were "deeply disappointed" with the decision. "Plains believes that neither the company nor any of its employees engaged in any criminal behavior at any time in connection with this accident, and that criminal charges are unwarranted. We will vigorously defend ourselves against these charges and are confident we will demonstrate that the charges have no merit and represent an inappropriate attempt to criminalize an unfortunate accident," read a press release.

Linda Krop, Chief Counsel for the Environmental Defense Center, hailed the announcement, calling it a “great deterrent” and insisted the criminal charges were justified. “Clearly, Plains neglected its responsibility to operate the pipeline safely and failed to report the spill in a timely manner,” she said.

Kristen Monsell, an attorney with San Francisco-based Center for Biological Diversity, expressed mixed feelings about the indictment charges: “It’s good to see Plains being held accountable for its role in this devastating spill, but our coast needs broader action. All the indictments in the world can’t change the fact that crude pipelines and oil drilling are inherently dangerous and just don’t belong in our fragile coastal environment.”