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Pipeline Safety Trust Applauds Federal Indictment of Companies Responsible for Spilling 25,000 Gallons of Crude Oil

BELLINGHAM, Washington [December 15, 2021] - The Pipeline Safety Trust (PST) is thankful to a federal grand jury for indicting Amplify Energy Corp.; Beta Operating Co. LLC (a wholly owned subsidiary of Amplify doing business as Beta Offshore); and San Pedro Bay Pipeline Co. (a wholly owned subsidiary of Amplify) on criminal charges for their alleged actions which led to a leak of 25,000 gallons of crude oil into the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Huntington Beach, CA that killed wildlife and degraded habitat.

The UC Davis Oiled Wildlife Care Network said last month over 80 dead animals had been recovered from the area of the spill. These included sea lions, a dolphin and multiple species of birds.

The federal grand jury states the accused failed to properly respond to eight different pipeline leak alarms which went off over the course of over 13 hours. In a statement provided by Amplify they claim they assumed the leak alarms were inaccurate and that their pipeline leak detection system was not working as intended.

“That they allegedly continued to hit the snooze button and ignore alarms, stopping and starting this pipeline, all the while leaking oil into our treasured Pacific Ocean is reckless, egregious, and unacceptable,” Pipeline Safety Trust Executive Director Bill Caram said. “This leak of 25,000 gallons of crude oil directly affects the vitality of our ecosystem. We applaud this federal grand jury for bringing charges against the alleged offenders. Criminal charges are too rarely used as an enforcement tool.”

Holding the operators accountable for their actions will help prevent future disasters such as this in the future. The beautiful California coastline and the entirety of our natural environment must be protected from the impact of negligent pipeline leaks.

Caram adds that more can be done at federal level by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to prevent incidents such as this from occurring. Current PHMSA regulations require operators to have a leak detection system, but set no performance standards or regulations as to how accurate or reliable these systems must be, often resulting in weak, erratic systems such as Amplify's.

"We need stronger regulations to require operators to have more robust leak detection systems and we need operators to take their responsibility to protect the environment seriously," Caram said.