



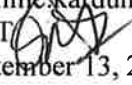
**GREGORY D. TOTTE**  
**District Attorney**

**NEWS RELEASE**

www.vcdistrictattorney.com

Twitter: @VenturaDAOoffice

---

Contact: Dominic Kardum  
Supervising Deputy District Attorney  
Telephone: 805-662-1750  
E-mail: dominic.kardum@ventura.org  
Approved: CMT   
Date: September 13, 2019  
Release No.: 19-112

**Pleas Entered by Former Santa Clara Waste Water Company  
Human Resources Manager for Her Role in 2014 Explosion**

*VENTURA, California* – District Attorney Gregory D. Totten announced today that former Santa Clara Waste Water Company Human Resources Manager Marlene Faltemier (DOB 1/13/65) entered guilty pleas for her role in a November 2014 explosion at 815 Mission Rock Road in Santa Paula that injured numerous employees and first responders, and for the subsequent storage of undisclosed hazardous chemicals on site in 2015.

On November 18, 2014, at approximately 3:45 a.m., an explosion occurred at 815 Mission Rock Road, Santa Paula, a wastewater treatment facility owned and operated by the corporate defendants. The investigation revealed the blast was caused by the mixing and disposal of hazardous chemicals into a 5,040-gallon vacuum truck not rated to hold nor transport such chemicals. Numerous employees of the corporate defendants as well as firefighters and paramedics who responded to the scene and rendered aid were injured either by the initial explosion or by inhaling toxic vapors which developed on site shortly afterwards from the chemicals that exploded out of the vacuum truck.

In November 2015, a search warrant was served at the corporate defendants' facility in Santa Paula which led to the discovery of approximately 5,500 gallons of sodium hydroxide, also known as Petromax, stored within a locked shipping container. These chemicals were required by law to be reported into the California Environmental Reporting System (CERS), yet the corporate defendants' officials had not reported their possession of Petromax since 2013.

Faltemier pled guilty to two felonies and two misdemeanor crimes in the consolidated indictment, including: conspiracy to impede an environmental enforcement official; conspiracy to fail to update a hazardous materials inventory, interference with enforcement, and withholding information regarding a real and substantial danger.

The investigation in this case determined Faltemier exchanged text messages with convicted codefendant David Wirsing detailing company efforts to hide chemicals from environmental inspectors before inspections were completed in November 2014. After the November 18, 2014, explosion, law enforcement confirmed Faltemier was personally aware of the presence of over 5,000 gallons of a chemical named “Petromax” being on site, yet she failed to report the presence of these chemicals in the California Environmental Reporting System as required by law.

Faltemier was the final defendant of the 11 originally charged back in 2015, whose case remained pending before the court. A sentencing hearing for Faltemier is scheduled October 10, 2019, at 1:30 p.m., in courtroom 22 of the Ventura County Superior Court. The investigation and prosecution of this case is the result of a joint effort by the California Attorney General’s Office; the Ventura County District Attorney’s Office; the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA); the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT); the State Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA); and the Ventura County Environmental Health Division.

###

The Ventura County District Attorney’s Office is the public prosecutor for the county’s 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and other professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.

Follow the Ventura County District Attorney’s Office on Twitter @VenturaDAOoffice