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## Overextended Cal OSHA challenged to keep track of Chevron refinery issues



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**RICHMOND, Calif.** — As KTVU continues its investigation into the Chevron refinery inspections, it appears Cal OSHA's role has more to do with paperwork than legwork.

During KTVU's investigation, thousands of pages of Cal OSHA's inspection reports on the Chevron/Richmond refinery were sifted through. As noted in the first part of this investigative report, on three occasions Chevron had a fire or a leak

that officials would not discuss.

There were a number of inspections that the refinery did pass, however.

In late 2010, in the wake of a deadly fire at a Washington state Tesoro refinery, Cal OSHA undertook to inspect all California refineries. The refinery's paperwork was found to be in order.

Cal OSHA Regional Manager Wende Carlson, confirmed that it was just a paperwork inspection.

"We did an onsite review of their program to enforce and make sure that their naphtha hydro treater operating procedures were effective to prevent this type of catastrophic event," explained Carlson. "Did we do a workaround? No."

Nonetheless, Cal OSHA pronounced that "California's refineries are some of the safest in the nation." KTVU asked Greg Karras, Senior Scientist for the non-profit advocacy group Communities For A Better Environment, if he agreed.

"No. They just took a statistic that was painted by the industry and bought it, hook, line and sinker," answered Karras. Chevron had no comment regarding Karras's assessment.

Four years ago, Cal OSHA randomly selected Chevron/Richmond for an inspection of its flare system. A flare system is a pressure relief system designed to prevent explosion by burning off excess gasses.

Chevron passed with flying colors. Even though Cal OSHA found the flaring system to be operational, Chevron still would not comment. Perhaps their reticence had to do with other regulatory agencies.

"Might be the criminal investigation the EPA has ongoing, alleging that Chevron willfully covered up and failed to monitor its flaring, so it didn't report the violations," said Karras.

In fact, Cal OSHA's Process Safety Management Division has a grand total of just eight inspectors to cover not just the state's 15 refineries, but more than 1400 other California plants and factories.

Cal OSHA Regional Manager Carlson defends her agency.

"We do the best we can with what we have," said Carlson. "You know, we would love more help. It would be great if we could have more inspectors."

To all of this, Chevron issued a general written statement saying that it cooperated with Cal OSHA on these inspections, encourages workers to identify or stop work on safety issues, without fear of reprisal.

Then KTVU learned something that might shock refinery neighbors.

"If you're familiar at all with refineries, small fires happen on a daily basis at these places," said Carlson. "That's why they have their own dedicated fire brigade."

Ultimately, it's up to the refineries to police themselves much in the same way the California Public Utilities Commission left safety regulation largely up to Pacific Gas & Electric, at least until the disastrous San Bruno explosion.

"The next incident, that might send thousands to the hospital again," warned Karras. "Or it could be more like Bhopal. It could kill."

Despite the funding provided by taxpayer money, it appears Cal OSHA has not enough inspectors and not enough answers.