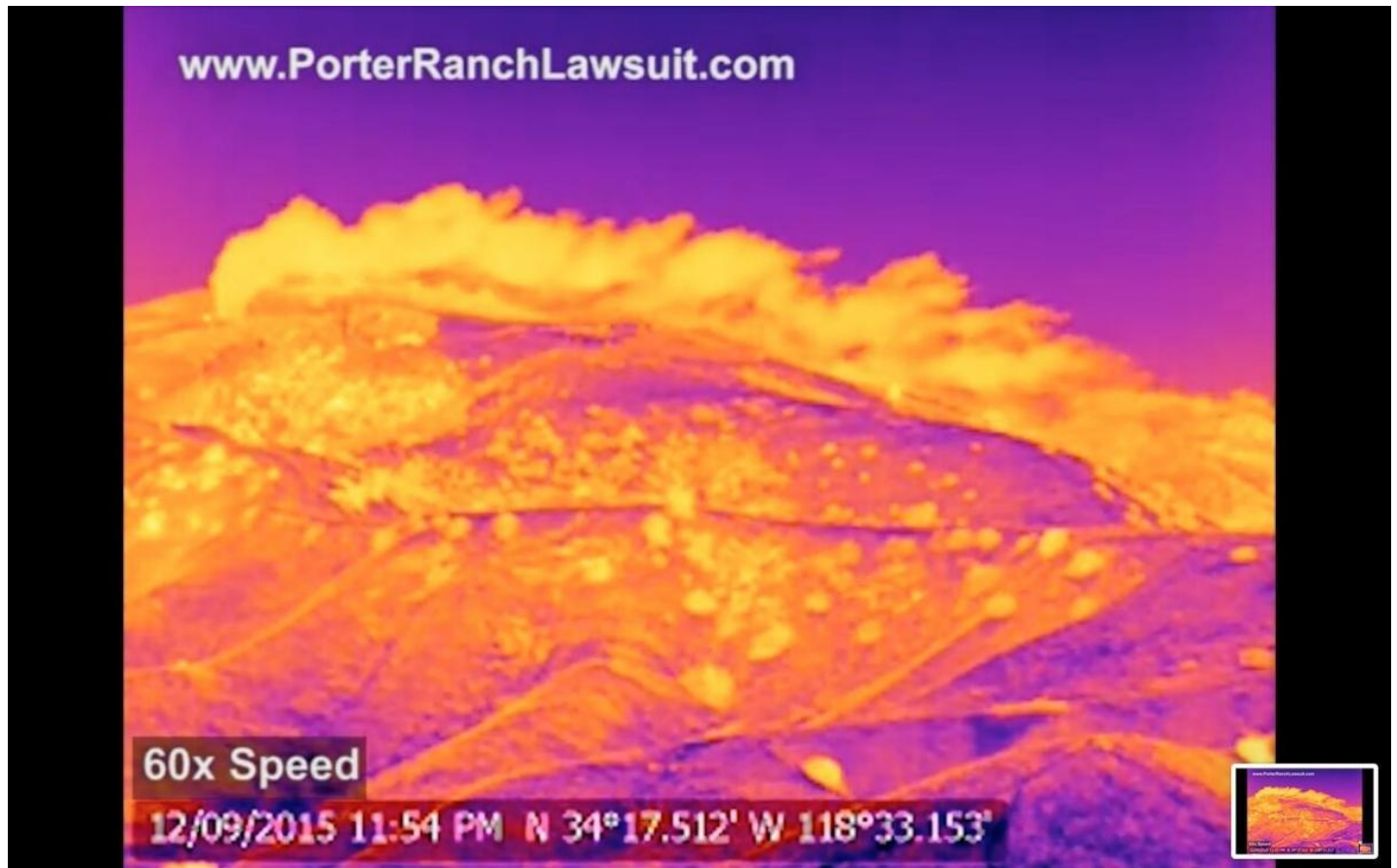


<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210927005879/en/>



Panish Shea & Boyle LLP: Sempra and Southern California Gas Company Agree to Settle Aliso Canyon Gas Well Blowout Litigation for Up to \$1.8 Billion

Sep 27, 2021



Infrared image of the uncontrollable release of natural gas during the Aliso Canyon Gas Well Blowout.

LOS ANGELES--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Sep 27, 2021--

Panish Shea & Boyle LLP:

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here:

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210927005879/en/>

Infrared image of the uncontrollable release of natural gas during the Aliso Canyon Gas Well Blowout. (Photo: Business Wire)

Following nearly six years of intense litigation and over \$5 million in discovery sanctions, Southern California Gas Company ("SoCalGas") and its parent company Sempra Energy ("Sempra") have agreed to pay up to \$1.8 billion to settle the claims of over 35,000 victims of the 2015 Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Facility blowout. Plaintiffs allege they suffered personal injury and property damage after one of SoCalGas' negligently maintained natural gas storage wells failed and uncontrollably released nearly 100,000 tons of methane and other substances into the atmosphere over 118 days. The Aliso Canyon blowout remains the biggest natural gas leak in U.S. history. Sempra and SoCalGas deny any wrongdoing.

Subject to certain conditions, the settlement money will be allocated among the plaintiffs in accordance with an allocation protocol to be developed by neutral, independent allocators.

"Our goal has always been obtaining justice for the men, women and children who were failed by SoCalGas throughout every turn of this catastrophe. This settlement, and the numerous discovery sanctions imposed by the court, hold Sempra and SoCalGas accountable for the Aliso Canyon blowout and their repeated misconduct throughout this litigation. This result could not have been obtained without the commitment, dedication, and hard work of the trial team preparing this case for trial," said Brian Panish, Plaintiffs' Lead Trial Counsel. "We recommend that all plaintiffs participate in the settlement. We will continue to ensure that all plaintiffs are fairly compensated for their injuries throughout this allocation process."

In this litigation, SoCalGas, Sempra Energy, and their counsel from Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP were sanctioned over \$5.7 million – one of the largest discovery sanctions in California history. The utility giants and their counsel wrongfully withheld over 150,000 documents under a pattern of discovery misconduct that the Court characterized as “willful, intentional, and in bad faith.”

In a February 2020 ruling, awarding \$525,610 in sanctions against defendants and defense counsel jointly, the court noted defendants' abuse of the discovery process as justification for these sanctions: "The court finds that Defendants' pattern of conduct in this case with respect to Defendants' claims of privilege, including repeated assertion of unmeritorious objections, repeated refusal to furnish a legally compliant privilege log, violation of court orders (in particular this court's September 18, 2019 order) and related efforts over an extended period (as discussed above) to misuse claims of privilege to attempt to deprive Plaintiffs of documents to which they are entitled, was willful, intentional and in bad faith." The Court found that there was "clear prejudice to Plaintiffs resulting from Defendants' conduct" in the case. The Court also found that Defendants had made misrepresentations to the Court in efforts to justify their privilege objections. As a result, Plaintiffs were entitled to take any deposition at Defendants' cost and expense arising out of the wrongfully withheld documents. Plaintiffs took over 585 days of depositions in the case, involving 470 witnesses. In total, Defendants will have ultimately paid over \$5.7 million in sanctions.

The Plaintiffs trial team in the Southern California Gas Leak Cases include Brian J. Panish and Jesse Creed of Panish Shea & Boyle LLP; Ray Boucher and Cathy Kim of Boucher LLP; Frank Pitre, Gary Praglin and Kelly Weil of Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy LLP; Michael Kelly and Lindsey Bayman of Kirtland Packard; Mariana McConnell and Paul Kiesel of Kiesel Law LLP; Frank Petosa of Morgan & Morgan; R. Rex Parris and Patricia K. Oliver of Parris Law Firm; Devin Bolton and Robin L. Greenwald of Weitz & Luxenberg; and Roland Tellis and Evan Zucker of Baron & Budd.

About Panish Shea & Boyle LLP

Panish Shea & Boyle LLP is a nationally recognized personal injury law firm representing plaintiffs in catastrophic injury, wrongful death, product liability, mass torts/class action, and business litigation cases. The firm is ranked by U.S. News & World Report and Best Lawyers® in the areas of Plaintiffs Mass Tort Litigation/Class Actions,

Plaintiffs Personal Injury Litigation and Plaintiffs Product Liability Litigation as a "Tier 1" Firm – the highest ranking a firm can receive – and among the top Plaintiff's law firms in the country by the *National Law Journal*.

About Baron & Budd

Baron & Budd is one of the largest, oldest and most revered plaintiffs' law firms in the nation. Our mission of "Protecting What's Right" spans the protection of people in virtually every aspect of their lives. Established more than four decades ago to fight for workers injured by asbestos, Baron & Budd has expanded to confront not only the asbestos industry but also other societal threats such as water contamination, unsafe pharmaceutical drugs and devices, trucking accidents, financial industry fraud, and automobile recalls.

About Boucher LLP

Boucher LLP is a boutique law practice with extensive legal experience handling individual cases as well as complex civil cases including consumer class actions, employment class actions, and mass torts litigation. Our legal expertise includes such areas as sexual abuse and harassment cases, catastrophic personal injury, wrongful death, product liability, workplace accidents, wage and hour, wrongful termination, pharmaceutical device defects, false labeling, and civil rights.

About Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP

Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy represents people or entities in cases involving only just principles or causes. The key to CPM's 50 years of success is its experienced attorneys and staff and their innovative approach to litigating complex matters in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy is also known for the breadth of its practice and the diversity of its clients: CPM attorneys are experienced in state and federal false claims matters, antitrust law, securities actions, employment law, consumer class actions, and personal injury cases, among other practice areas.

About Kiesel Law LLP

Kiesel Law LLP is an AV-rated firm whose principals have extensive trial and civil litigation experience in federal and state courts throughout the country. Paul Kiesel is a Past President of the Los Angeles County Bar Association and he was recently selected by "The Daily Journal" as one of the Top 25 Plaintiff's Lawyers in California. Both Kiesel and partner Steven Archer are American Board of Trial Advocates members. Kiesel Law had two of the top 20 verdicts in California in 2017.

About Kirtland & Packard, LLP

Founded in 1932, the award-winning law firm of Kirtland & Packard measures success by the number of lives changed through the attorneys' relentless pursuit of justice on behalf of clients who have suffered damages as a result of negligence and misconduct. Lawyers at Kirtland & Packard have attained significant verdicts and settlements in claims as varied as wrongful termination, aircraft accidents and many others in the fields of personal injury and business law.

About Morgan & Morgan

The largest contingency law firm in the United States, Morgan & Morgan has recovered more than \$10 billion for our clients. The firm has more than 800 attorneys across 49 states and Washington D.C. and represent clients in a wide range of practice areas: national mass torts and class actions, personal injury, workers' compensation, medical malpractice, labor and employment, mesothelioma, and product liability lawsuits, among others. [forthepeople.com]

About Parris Law Firm

The PARRIS Law Firm is recognized as one of America's top personal injury, employment, and environmental law firms. With a proven track record of fighting for justice on behalf of families and individuals, the firm boasts numerous seven and eight-

figure verdicts and settlements.

About Weitz & Luxenberg

Established in 1986, Weitz & Luxenberg is one of the premier plaintiff's law firms in the nation. The largest mass tort and personal injury litigation law firm in New York, Weitz & Luxenberg is also one of the most successful firms nationally, having won over \$17 billion in verdicts and settlements for clients from all 50 states.

View source version on

[businesswire.com:https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210927005879/en/](https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210927005879/en/)

CONTACT: Angela Bailey, Panish Shea & Boyle LLP

bailey@psblaw.com 909.286.4040

KEYWORD: UNITED STATES NORTH AMERICA CALIFORNIA

INDUSTRY KEYWORD: LEGAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

SOURCE: Panish Shea & Boyle LLP

Copyright Business Wire 2021.

PUB: 09/27/2021 09:59 PM/DISC: 09/27/2021 09:59 PM

<http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210927005879/en>

Copyright Business Wire 2021.