

Summary: Investigation of Benzene Concerns at the Pinedale Field Office

Report Date: June 4, 2015

OIG initiated this investigation based on information we received from the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM), Pinedale Field Office (PFO), Pinedale, WY. PFO expressed concerns to the associate field manager about the presence of benzene at the Stewart Point oil and gas fields. These fields are regulated by BLM.

According to the complaint, BLM officials had identified and reported high levels of benzene near the town of Pinedale, WY. It was reported that BLM management initially refused to conduct a survey of the benzene. The Wyoming State Occupational Safety and Health Department conducted testing, which confirmed high benzene levels. As a result, PFO ceased tank gauging verification operations for 2 years.

We concluded that BLM is currently and actively addressing the benzene issue in addition to monitoring other volatile, organic compounds. BLM is currently working with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the American Petroleum Institute, and oil and gas industry operators to help alleviate the negative impact of volatile, organic compounds. BLM also plans to address the benzene issue in an Instructional Memorandum that further identifies industry standards.

No OIG action was taken in this case. Information collected regarding the issue will be provided to the OIG's Energy Audits Unit for its consideration and a potential follow-up review.

This is a summary of an investigative report that was issued internally to the U.S. Department of the Interior. This summary was posted to the web on August 20, 2015.

