

# Jail inmate injured in Fresno gun range gas explosion dies

By Eryn Baldrice-Guy



Pacific Gas & Electric Co. released this photo of the area where the natural gas line was ruptured April 17, 2015.  
PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC CO.

- *Fresno County Jail inmate dies of injuries from April 17 natural gas explosion at a Fresno gun range*
- *The inmate was among 13 injured in the blast*
- *The cause of the blast remains under investigation*

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A Fresno County Jail inmate injured when a natural gas line ruptured in a fireball at the Fresno County Sheriff's Foundation gun range in northwest Fresno has died, the Sheriff's Office said Monday night.

Jeremiah Espino, 52, of Sanger had been hospitalized since the April 17 explosion at the gun range just east of the Highway 99 bridge over the San Joaquin River. He had been serving a sentence on domestic violence charges.

Espino was one of 13 people injured when the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. pipeline exploded in flames. The cause of the explosion remains under investigation.

The blast happened as a front-end loader was moving dirt around at the top of a berm above and behind the shooting targets at the range.

The resulting explosion sent flames up to 200 feet into the sky, and the flow of high-pressure gas raged with such

ferocity that the intense heat scorched nearby trees, ignited a grass fire and damaged the adjacent Union Pacific railroad tracks. The radiant heat could also be felt by motorists driving several hundred feet away on Highway 99 before the road was closed.

The county equipment operator, Ismael Arreazola, was seriously burned. Two sheriff's deputies and members of a crew of inmates doing maintenance work were also hurt, and three of the inmates had been listed for a time in critical condition in the burn unit at Community Regional Medical Center.

The Sheriff's Office said Tuesday that two other inmates and the county equipment operator remain in the hospital. Sheriff's spokesman Tony Botti said the Sheriff's Office would have no other comment because of the ongoing investigation and pending legal action.

PG&E issued a statement Monday night expressing condolences to Espino's family and others injured in the blast.

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