

# **UK ONSHORE OIL & GAS INCIDENTS JANUARY 2013 TO JUNE 2016**

This is a partial list of incidents relating to onshore oil and gas activities in the UK between January 2013 and June 2016, as reported in a range of sources, including local media outlets, Environment Agency and Health and Safety Executive reports, and in photographs and film footage published in the public arena.

In the offshore industry, there have been 1,768 reported spills, leaks and unintended releases of oil, gas and chemicals between 1st January 2013 and 6th January. Of those incidents where the volumes of releases were recorded, 465 were oil spills, 444 were chemical spills and 379 were spillages of both substances. More than a fifth of incidents involved a release of half a tonne or more. There were at least three recorded rig fires and a further 14 incidents that were assessed as having been at risk of fire and/or explosion. The Health and Safety Executive also issued 124 notices to offshore drilling companies in the same period.

Due to data privacy, neither the UK Government nor the regulatory authorities publish a publicly available database of onshore incidents. It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain the true scale of incidents at onshore oil and gas wells. Other sources have had to be used where available and often involve cases where the operators have denied the incidents despite reliable photographic, film or documentary evidence to the contrary. This booklet, therefore, should be considered as a partial list only, where the evidence has been made publicly available.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Details</b>
January 2013	Marishes, North Yorkshire	Flood water from two nearby rivers covered the well site in three feet of water.
5 February 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	Carbon monoxide emissions exceeded the limit two days in a row when the Waste Heat Recovery Unit was brought online during maintenance works on the gas turbines.
9 March 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	Approximately 560kg (1,235lbs) of gas and 13,600 litres (2,992 gallons) of crude oil and produced water was released as a spray that covered 10,800 square metres (116,250 square feet) of drill pad and a land management area north east of the site.
13 March 2013	Preese Hall, Lancashire	A Freedom of Information Act request by the Guardian revealed that Government ministers had warned Cuadrilla over its “performance as a licensee” in that the company had “failed to recognise the significance” of damage to the Preese Hall fracking well in 2011 and that the matter was not reported to the Government officials until six months later.
14 April 2013	Canonbie, Dumfries and Galloway	The Herald Scotland newspaper reported that the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency was investigating a potential gas leak at coal bed methane wells at Canonbie. The operator of the wells denied there were any leaks.
4 June 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	Low fuel levels in the gas turbines caused the Waste Heat Recovery Unit to come online and exceeded carbon monoxide limits.

23 July 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	A breach of carbon monoxide limits occurred when a problem with the gas turbine demineralisation system caused the Waste Heat Recovery Unit to come online.
23 August 2013	Balcombe, West Sussex	A tanker was filmed leaking an unknown fluid onto the road whilst entering the site.
5 September 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	A water pipe on the demineralisation system serving two gas turbines was damaged and put the turbines out of action. No carbon monoxide was sampled but the operator stated that levels would have exceeded the limits.
7 September 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	A faulty damper caused two gas turbines to trip and the Waste Heat Recovery Unit to come online. No samples of carbon monoxide were taken, but the operator stated that levels would have exceeded the limits.
7 September 2013	Balcombe, West Sussex	Operations at the site were suspended when noise monitoring revealed that levels were 20% higher than the acceptable limits imposed by the planning conditions. The drilling was not able to recommence until the afternoon of 9 <sup>th</sup> September.
6 October 2013	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Rathlin Energy submitted a report of a gas release from the well. The gas ignited during the installation of the well head.
11 October 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	The Waste Heat Recovery Unit started when a shutdown of the gas plant occurred, causing carbon monoxide limits to be breached.

16 October 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	The Waste Heat Recovery Unit was put online for six hours and despite carbon monoxide samples were not recorded, the operator stated that the limits would have been breached.
26 October 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	The Waste Heat Recovery Unit was put online in order to stabilise hot oil temperature for 24 hours, causing carbon monoxide levels to exceed the limits.
4 December 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	15,000 litres (3,300 gallons) of crude oil and produced water and 70,000 litres (15,398 gallons) of gas spilled from a pinhole leak in a production line thought to have been the result of corrosion. All the liquid was contained on site, but some gas drifted off the island.
4 December 2013	Wytch Farm, Dorset	Spot samples revealed that carbon monoxide emissions exceeded acceptable levels from the Waste Heat Recovery Unit at the Gathering Station.
8 January 2014	Singleton, West Sussex	An estimated 10 litres (2 gallons) of crude oil was released and dispersed as a fine film in the wind when the 12mm stainless steel instrument tubing failed at a compression fitting.
27 January 2014	Manchester Ship Canal, Manchester	A BBC Inside Out programme revealed that almost 8,401,000 litres (1,848,000 gallons) of radioactive produced water from the Preese Hall fracking well had been discharged into the Manchester Ship Canal in 2011 after the fluids had been classed as an industrial effluent rather than radioactive waste under the regulations in force at the time.

2 February 2014	Barton Moss, Salford	A number of photos were published showing issues with HGVs making deliveries to the site. These included a screwdriver that was used in place of a safety pin, a rubber glove being used to replace a missing cap on a fuel tank and chemicals dripping onto the road from the rear of a tanker.
6 February 2014	Barton Moss, Salford	Calcium Dihydroxide powder was filmed spilling from a truck entering the site.
13 February 2014	Pickering, North Yorkshire	Natural gas rich in hydrogen sulphide leaked from a pipeline at a gas site at Pickering. Investigations revealed that the pipe had not been inspected since 2010. It was not known how long the gas had been leaking before it was spotted.
16 February 2014	Wytch Farm, Dorset	A breach in the limits of oxides of nitrogen was recorded at the Waste Heat Recovery Unit at the Gathering Station after a suspected restriction in the water injection line in the gas turbines.
18 February 2014	Wytch Farm, Dorset	Carbon monoxide emissions from the Waste Heat Recovery Unit at the Gathering Station exceeded the approved limit.
8 March 2014	Wytch Farm, Dorset	Carbon monoxide emissions from the Waste Heat Recovery Unit at the Gathering Station exceeded the approved limit. Three days later, the environmental permit for the site was amended and the operator was no longer required to report any future limit breaches to the Environment Agency.

30 April 2014	Preese Hall, Lancashire	An Environment Agency inspection revealed that pressure in the annulus had been detected when gas has entered the borehole casing. Although a cement plug had been installed when the well was abandoned in 2013, a second cement plug had to be inserted.
11 May 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	A resident in New Ellenby, East Yorkshire, reported a “brown sludge” had spilled from a vehicle heading to the West Newton site. The spill spread over 50 metres (164 feet) along the road through the village.
11 May 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Photos allegedly showed the perimeter ditches were full of fluid and overflowing.
23 May 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Photos were published allegedly showing fluids flooding into an adjacent field and footpath from overflowing perimeter ditches.
29 May 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Two separate leaks in a storage tank were filmed. It is not known how much fluid spilled from the tank.
1 June 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Photos allegedly showed fluids flooding off the well pad from overflowing perimeter ditches.
3 June 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	An Environment Agency inspection revealed that a fuel bowser for the drilling rig had an incorrectly fitted drainage outlet, contrary to the Control of Pollution Act.
2 July 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	During the morning, convoys totalling 64 HGVs and 60 cars and vans were filmed arriving at West Newton despite this being prohibited in the planning conditions. One convoy alone included 16 6-axle HGVs and four cars/vans and a number of trailers.

3 July 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	An Environment Agency inspection found that paper records of discharges to surface water were not being kept, that an updated Site Emergency Plan was not present on site and that the site had been relying upon security personnel to report leaks, odours and other incidents.
5 July 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	A dead hare was photographed floating in the perimeter ditch.
11 July 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Photos showing full and overflowing perimeter ditches were published.
21 July 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Dead hares were photographed floating in fluids in a perimeter ditch at West Newton, East Yorkshire.
August 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	The Everflow ESR-550 drilling rig was found to not have carried a valid Declaration of Conformity. The rig had been imported in 2010 and was used at the Preese Hall fracking well in 2011 and other sites in Lancashire without a valid Declaration.
9 August 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Rathlin Energy reported an unplanned closure of the well's blowout preventer. All work on the well was stopped three days later.
14 August 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Well intervention equipment was photographed at the site. It was revealed that the well had to be shut down due to pressure changes between the casings in the well-bore. The Health and Safety Executive confirmed that it did not have any personnel on site and were relying on "Rathlin's duty to keep us informed". The Environment Agency stated that they were not aware of the incident.

23 August 2014	Crawberry Hill, East Yorkshire	A photograph was published allegedly showing security vehicles leaving the site with the number plates deliberately obscured.
24 August 2014	Crawberry Hill, East Yorkshire	A security vehicle was seen leaving the site with the number plates covered. Police cautioned the driver.
28 August 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	An Environment Agency site visit report stated “very strong smell of gas/H <sub>2</sub> S [Hydrogen sulphide]”.
28 August 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	An Environment Agency inspection revealed issues with the hazardous materials inventory, including seven containers of substances not included on the list that were found present on site.
9 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of off-site odour were lodged with the Environment Agency.
10 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	An Environment Agency site visit reported “extremely strong hydrocarbon type odour present on the site”.
10 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of off-site odour were lodged with the Environment Agency.
12 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Further complaints of off-site odour were lodged with the Environment Agency by people residing downwind of the well pad.
14 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	A sixth incident of off-site odours resulted in local residents reporting to the Environment Agency.
18 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	A number of complaints of off-site odour were lodged with the Environment Agency.
18 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Further complaints of off-site odour were lodged with the Environment Agency following complaints earlier in the day.



19 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of odours from the site were made to the Environment Agency, which stated that the smell was gas from the well venting through the flare.
25 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of off-site odour continued to be made to the Environment Agency.
26 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	For a second day in a row, local homeowners made complaints to the Environment Agency over continuing odours coming from the well site.
29 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of off-site odours continued to be lodged with the Environment Agency.
30 September 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of off-site odour were lodged with the Environment Agency.
5 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Local residents made further complaints to the Environment Agency after more odours from the site.
10 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	An Environment Agency compliance assessment report stated that a rodenticide in bait boxes was believed to have contributed to the number of small animals found dead in the perimeter ditch. The operator denied this.
14 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of smells and headaches were made to the Environment Agency.
15 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of off-site odour were lodged with the Environment Agency.
16 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of off-site odour were registered with the Environment Agency.
17 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	For the fourth consecutive day, residents living downwind of the well site were exposed to odours and made complaints to the Environment Agency.

20 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	After a three day break, complaints of off-site odour were once again lodged with the Environment Agency.
24 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	Complaints of off-site odour were lodged with the Environment Agency.
29 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	A number of residents local to the site reported “bad smells”, sore throats and headaches to the Environment Agency.
29 October 2014	West Newton, East Yorkshire	As the site operations began to come to an end, the twenty first, and final, reports of off-site odours were made to the Environment Agency.
15 December 2014	Ellesmere Port, Cheshire	A BBC Northwest Tonight news report filmed a number of hose connectors on the 54,000 litres (11,878 gallons) drilling fluid storage tanks being held in place with gaffer tape, and that only 3 or 4 bolts were used on the pipe flanges connecting the hoses to the tanks.
3 March 2015	West Newton, East Yorkshire	An investigation into the site revealed 19 environmental permit breaches between July 2014 and January 2015, including 9 cases relating to operational paperwork, 3 cases of late reporting of monitoring data, 1 case of missing data in gas analysis, 1 case of failing to monitor flare temperature, 1 case of off-site odour, 3 cases of breaches of odour management plan and 1 case of activities not carried out in line with permit description.

26 January 2016	National	A research paper published in an environmental journal revealed that 30% of abandoned wells in the UK were leaking methane and that leaks were more likely to develop within the first ten years after abandonment – much sooner than previously thought. The research also revealed that there is no monitoring of abandoned wells in the UK.
8 February 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	Fluid was filmed discharging from an outlet pipe and into an adjacent farm ditch. The operator did not have a discharge permit. Several people reported falling ill after smelling an odour in the vicinity of the pipe, including one person that fell violently ill within a hour of spending a few minutes close to the pipe in order to get film footage.
9 February 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	An odorous fluid was filmed continuing to discharge from an outlet pipe.
15 February 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	Fluid was filmed discharging from an outlet pipe. An on-duty Police Liaison Officer confirmed on film a “quite strong gassy or diesel type smell”.
11 March 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	A fluid was filmed dripping from the rear of a tanker leaving the Horse Hill site.

12 March 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	Volunteers at an equestrian centre adjoining the site reported that four individuals had simultaneously suffered from headaches and nosebleeds and that two horses had developed runny noses and eyes during the course of the work at the site. They also complained of sulphur-like smells, loud noises and bright lights from the site that were affecting the horses and the business. The horses were subsequently confined to the stables for the duration of the work.
14 March 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	A significant quantity of an unknown fluid was filmed spilling from a tanker onto the road.
16 March 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	A 24-hour Emergency Spill Response van and personnel in full-body protective suits were filmed at the site.
18 March 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	An unknown fluid was filmed spilling onto the road from a tanker.
21 March 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	Diesel was filmed leaking from equipment onto the road whilst leaving the site.
22 March 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	An unknown fluid was filmed spilling on the road from a truck leaving the Horse Hill site.
22 March 2016	Horse Hill, Surrey	Human waste was filmed spilling out of equipment and onto the road from a truck leaving the site.
27 March 2016	Woodburn Forest, Northern Ireland	A small quantity of mineral oil was spilled at the site and entered into a waterway. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency observed the spill and stated that no action was required by the operator of the site. Northern Ireland Water inspectors claimed that they did not see any evidence of a spill.

10 April 2016	Woodburn Forest, Northern Ireland	A spillage of fuel or hydraulic oil was reported to the authorities, but an inspection did not take place until the following day. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency stated that no samples were taken and no further action was required.
6 June 2016	Woodburn Forest, Northern Ireland	A fire engine arrived at the site after reports of a strong smell of gas and subsequent illnesses from people nearby.
6 June 2016	Woodburn Forest, Northern Ireland	Steven Agnew, Green Party MLA for North Down, stated in an Assembly debate that “I was there on Friday, and I saw the pipe coming out of the site into the forest, presumably for water run-off. It is not exactly watertight. There were plenty of damp areas outside the site, and everybody knows that they are not because of the recent rain.”
12 June 2016	Woodburn Forest, Northern Ireland	A photo was published showing a stream of an unknown liquid flowing from the site and into the surrounding forest. A group of straw bales had been placed at the point where the liquid was leaving the site, but failed to prevent the fluid from flowing off the site.

## Notes

## Notes

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**By Martin D Dale**

**Foreword by James Bolam and Sue Jameson**

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