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The Aliso Canyon gas leak was a disaster. There are 10,000 more storage wells out there just like it

By DREW MICHANOWICZ MAY 14, 2018 | 4:15 AM



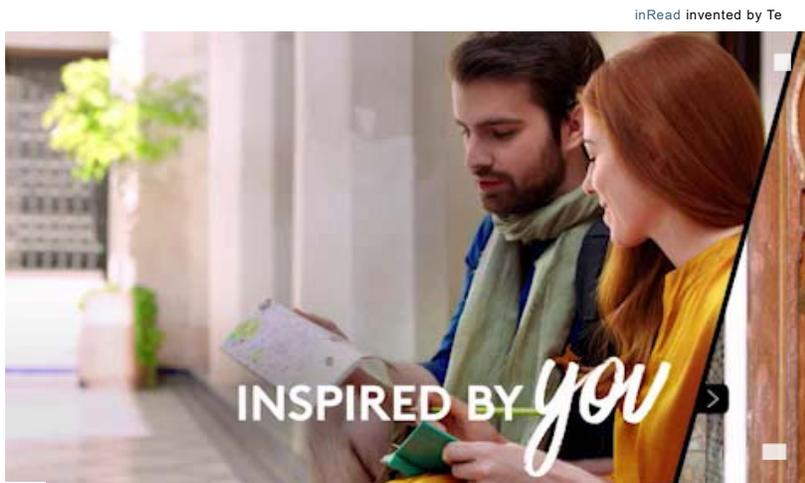


Crews work on a relief well at the Aliso Canyon facility above the Porter Ranch area of Los Angeles on Dec. 9, 2015. (Dean Musgrove / Associated Press)



The blowout at the Aliso Canyon natural gas storage well was one of the worst environmental disasters in U.S history. It went on for 118 days in 2015 and 2016 — 25 days longer than the Deepwater Horizon oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico. More natural gas escaped from that single leaking 10-inch-diameter pipe than 80,000 homes would use in a year. Thousands of residents in Porter Ranch evacuated after complaining of headaches and nosebleeds. Estimates peg costs at nearly \$1 billion. Continuing restrictions on storage at Aliso Canyon are still disrupting gas delivery to power plants.

The key thing about the failed well at Aliso Canyon is that it wasn't originally designed for high-pressure gas storage. It was an oil well drilled back in 1956 that had been repurposed. Because of its vintage, at certain depths, it had only one layer of pipe separating the gas from surrounding rock. Wells built today use multiple concentric pipes, and only the innermost pipe transports gas so as to reduce the risk of a blowout.



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