

April 8, 2026

Brent Casey, REHS
Deputy Director
Riverside County Department of Environmental Health
Hazardous Materials Management Branch
P.O. Box 7909
Riverside, California 92513-7909

Dear Mr. Casey:

From June 2025, through January 2026, CalEPA, in coordination with the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), Office of the State Fire Marshall (OSFM), and State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board), conducted an evaluation of the of the Riverside County Department of Environmental Health, Hazardous Materials Management Branch, Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) to assess the CUPA's performance and implementation of the Unified Program (2025 CUPA Performance Evaluation).

During the 2025 CUPA Performance Evaluation, a Preliminary Summary of Findings Report was provided to the CUPA that identified the initial findings. Please find the enclosed Final Summary of Findings Report.

Based upon review and completion of the performance evaluation, CalEPA has determined the CUPA meets overall implementation of the Unified Program. I commend you and your team. The CUPA has done an exemplary job of maintaining a strong and commendable Unified Program.

Pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 27, section 15330, subdivision (b)(6), the CUPA shall submit each Evaluation Progress Report to CalEPA in accordance with the specified due date. With each Progress Report, the CUPA will continue to revise and/or submit any plan, policy, document, or facility information required for any Deficiency or Incidental Finding. An Evaluation Progress Report template will be provided by the CalEPA Team Lead. Each Progress Report must be submitted to the CalEPA Team Lead via email or uploaded to the established SharePoint website.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the protection of public health and the environment through the implementation of the Unified Program.

To ensure the CUPA Performance Evaluation process is as effective and efficient as intended, I kindly request the included evaluation survey to be completed and returned to Melinda Blum, at Melinda.Blum@calepa.ca.gov. If you would like to have specific comments remain anonymous, please indicate so on the survey.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact Melinda Blum at Melinda.Blum@calepa.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Jason Boetzer
Deputy Secretary
Local Program Coordination and Emergency Response

Enclosure

cc sent via email:

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UNIFIED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FINAL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REPORT

CUPA: Riverside County Department of Environmental Health
Hazardous Materials Management Branch

2025 Evaluation Assessment: June 2025 through January 2026

Timeframe Evaluated: April 1, 2022, through March 31, 2025

Note: OSFM evaluation timeframe July 1, 2021, through March 31, 2025

Evaluation Team Members:

- CalEPA Team Lead: Kaeleigh Pontif
- CalEPA: Gerrit Kovach
- DTSC: Mia Goings
- State Water Board: Kaitlin Cottrell
- CAL FIRE-OSFM: Mary Wren-Wilson

Rating: The Unified Program implementation and performance of the CUPA is considered to *meet* Unified Program Standards.

In accordance with California Code of Regulations, title 27, section 15330, subdivision (b)(6), **the CUPA shall submit the first Evaluation Progress Report to CalEPA on July 13, 2026**. An Evaluation Progress Report template will be provided by the CalEPA Team Lead.

Any required subsequent Progress Reports shall be submitted to CalEPA in accordance with the specified due date. With each subsequent Progress Report, the CUPA will continue to revise and/or submit any plan, policy, document, or facility information required for any Deficiency or Incidental Finding.

Each Progress Report must be submitted to the CalEPA Team Lead via email or uploaded to the established SharePoint website. Questions or comments regarding this evaluation should be directed to the CalEPA Team Lead:

Kaeleigh Pontif
Phone: (916) 803-0623
E-mail: Kaeleigh.pontif@calepa.ca.gov

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS, EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING IMPLEMENTATION, AND CHALLENGES

Various accomplishments and outstanding efforts, as well as challenges that impact the CUPA's overall ability to implement the Unified Program.

1. UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK (UST) REGULATIONS, CHAPTER 16 REWRITE:

In preparation for the permanent closure requirements of all single-walled USTs, The State Water Board created a regulation vetting workgroup consisting of numerous UST experts from both the public and private sector to assist in the development of the revised regulatory language California Code of Regulations, title 23, division 3, chapter 16. The time commitment of the CUPA as a participant in the workgroup was estimated to be a minimum of four hours a week for 12 weeks.

Though the additional time commitment to participate in the workgroup detracted from the time allocated to conduct regular inspection and enforcement duties, the CUPA was able to meet the expected annual UST inspection frequency. Having a UST inspector from the CUPA participate in the workgroup provided invaluable assistance to the development of the Chapter 16 regulation revisions for the UST community.

2. 2023 RECIPIENT OF THE SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT:

CalEPA presented the 2023 Secretary's Award for Environmental Achievement to the CUPA in recognition of the robust enforcement program that ensures proper violation classification and enforcement escalation for violations observed during inspections.

The CUPA continues to implement necessary enforcement actions, has a strong history of meeting inspection frequencies for each program element, maintains an adequate fee accountability program and has an extensive training program for new inspectors.

The CUPA is a collaborating partner with the Participating Agencies (PA) within the jurisdiction of the CUPA and participates in various efforts led by the CUPA Forum Board and Unified Program Administration and Advisory Group.

The CUPA sets an outstanding example for other Unified Program Agencies through the continued success in performance and implementation of regulatory requirements in addition to the establishing partnerships between the regulatory and regulated communities, as well as local and state government agencies.

3. OUTSTANDING UST PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION:

Between January 1 2022, and December 31, 2024, the CUPA conducted 100% of annual UST compliance inspections for approximately 700 UST facilities with over 2,300 tanks. Additionally, the Semi-Annual Report (Report 6) Technical Compliance Rate (TCR) indicate CUPA inspectors note United States Environmental Protection Agency TCR criteria violations at a rate consistent with the California average of 60%. This illustrates a fine attention to detail for citing UST Leak Detection violations when performing annual compliance inspections.

Further, the UST Program inspection and enforcement efforts of the CUPA are exemplified by the high rate of RTC obtained and reported to the California Environmental Reporting System (CERS). An average of 98% leak detection violations cited during the evaluation timeframe were resolved and have RTC reported to CERS, of which 80% obtained RTC within 60 days of being

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cited as required by the California Health and Safety Code section 25288, subdivision (d). The CUPA has provided ample documentation of enforcement in CERS amounting to a total of 50 Administrative Enforcement Order (AEO) cases, \$150,400 in penalties, and issuance of 10 red tags.

4. INSPECTION REPORT WRITING:

Inspectors are well trained in writing inspection reports and drafting Hazardous Waste Generator (HWG) Program violations. Inspection reports contain highly descriptive observations and factual basis for cited violations. This attentive detail is also reported to CERS, where violation comments entered have detailed observations and corrective actions. The observations written by inspectors in inspection reports provide the reasoning behind when, where, and how a violation occurred and are written in a way that is concise and understandable.

The commitment put forth by CUPA personnel in ensuring facilities are compliant with regulatory requirements by way of conducting timely inspections, including details for cited violations in inspection reports and CERS, applying enforcement, and providing guidance to regulated facility representatives to ensure return to compliance is obtained, demonstrates a unique and thorough collective effort regarding implementation of the HWG Program.

5. EMERGENCY RESPONSE EFFORTS:

The CUPA staffs a 24/7 hazmat emergency response (ER) team and responds jointly with Cal Fire Hazmat and the 3 additional Fire Hazmat Teams in the county. The ER Team consists of 13 CUPA staff, the majority of whom work as district inspectors during business hours with a small number of dedicated responders during business hours. The team members are trained at the Specialist level and can perform every hazmat role during a response. The ER Team responds to an average of 800 complaints and incidents annually. They complete multiple hours of training each year to maintain skills, work collaboratively with a multitude of agencies, participate in hazmat exercises, and assist responders with CERS information while on scene. The CUPA Hazmat Emergency Response Team has continued to aid in multiple emergency response recovery efforts, including multiple Wildfires (Airport, Fairview, Highland, Fillmore, Country Squires), Lithium-Ion Battery Fires, a Styrene Rail Incident, and the Lawson Flooding Incident, among others. The ER team is a dedicated group who go above and beyond every day to ensure the safety of the environment and community in Riverside County.

6. CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNIFIED PROGRAM:

The CUPA continues to actively participate in the CUPA Forum Board and the Unified Program Administration and Advisory Group (UPAAG) via a variety of Unified Program committees, technical advisory groups (TAGs), and workgroups that function to coordinate, consolidate, and make consistent the implementation of the Unified Program throughout the state. The CUPA has been actively serving as a CUPA Forum Board member, was previously the Issue Coordinator for Hazardous Waste, participated in the Data and Enforcement Steering Committees, the Annual Unified Program Training Conference Committee as well as the Inspection Report Writing Guidance Document Workgroup. CUPA staff are active in the Hazardous Waste, UST, Aboveground Petroleum Storage Act (APSA), California Accidental Release Prevention (CalARP), Hazardous Materials Business Plan (HMBP), Emergency Response, and Enforcement TAG's including staff serving as past Chair of the UST Tag.

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The CUPA also has internal technical committees for each program element within the Unified Program. With multiple CUPA field offices throughout Riverside County, the internal technical committees ensure that each office has staff representation to consistently interpret and apply guidance and regulations for applicable programs. This also allows for the facilitation of discussion and an open forum to resolve technical programmatic issues.

7. ROBUST ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM:

The CUPA has a robust enforcement program that pursues a graduated series of enforcement throughout Riverside County, ensuring proper classification and escalation for violations observed during inspections. For violations that require escalation, the internal AEO process for formal enforcement is streamlined and accessible with over 90 AEOs being conducted during the evaluation period. In addition, the City of Riverside Fire Department PA utilizes the AEO process for enforcement within the jurisdiction of the PA, utilizing CUPA staff to serve as their enforcement officer as well as providing guidance on penalty calculations and document preparation. This parallel enforcement strategy is expected to make enforcement more comprehensive and consistent within Riverside County for all businesses, whether regulated by the CUPA or a PA. The CUPA also works very closely with Riverside County's Office of the District Attorney (DA) staff on environmental, Statewide and local enforcement cases, while also being an active participant in the DA's Environmental Crimes Task Force.

8. TRAINING PROGRAM:

The CUPA has experienced staffing challenges due to internal promotions and transfers, resignations, and retirements. 11 new CUPA staff have been hired and trained over the last few years, which is approximately one third of the CUPA inspector staff. In addition, 5 staff were trained for the CUPA Hazmat Emergency Response Team. The department also implemented a new database management system in June 2024 which required training, learning of new processes, working through work stoppages, and adjustment and acclimation to the new system. Even with these challenges, the CUPA has continued to perform at a high level while maintaining inspection frequency, return to compliance, enforcement activity, and a fully staffed emergency response team. This is a testament to an outstanding internal training program and seasoned staff knowledge and proficiencies.

The CUPA has a comprehensive training program for new inspectors. New inspectors are trained in all programs within the first 6 months of hire which involves classroom and field training. All inspectors are also trained to the Hazardous Materials Technician level, with many also trained to the Hazardous Materials Specialist level. Training is tracked and refreshed annually if not more frequently. The CUPA conducts semi-annual training for the Hazmat Branch staff and the PA staff with the CUPA staff primarily conducting the training for their colleagues. This includes all programs for International Code Council (ICC) certification and Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) continuing education credits. CUPA staff have also routinely participated in and provided training at Annual Unified Program Training Conferences as well as provide outreach training to city and state agencies and hazmat emergency response groups in the county.

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9. QUALITY OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCEDURAL DOCUMENTS AND CONSISTENCY IN REPORTING:

The Unified Program administrative and procedural documents established by the CUPA consistently meet or surpass the requirements set forth in California Code of Regulations (CCR), title 27. The CUPA is consistent in adhering to the requirements for reporting information to CERS and CalEPA.

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DEFICIENCIES REQUIRING CORRECTION

Deficiency “is a major deviation in implementation of one or more Unified Program elements from the expected standards set forth in statute or regulation. It is a systemic problem that could impact the safety and protection of human health and the environment.” (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 27, § 15100, subd. (k).) In addition, recommendations may be provided.

1. DEFICIENCY:

The local ordinance (LO), Ordinance No. 617, An Ordinance of the County of Riverside Amending Ordinance No. 617 Regulating Underground Storage Tank Systems Containing Hazardous Substances, is inconsistent with state law as detailed in the 2021 Performance Evaluation Final Summary of Findings Report.

Note: During the 2021 Performance Evaluation Progress Report process, the CUPA provided a timeline to revise, draft and repeal the LO and provided a revised LO that is consistent with state law. Leading up to the 2025 evaluation, the CUPA was in discussion with the State Water Board on LO revisions. The CUPA opted to withhold finalizing revisions until further guidance was issued by the State Water Board on Chapter 16 revisions.

CITATION(S):

Health & Saf. Code, §§ 25284, 25289, subd. (b), 25299, subd. (b); Cal. Code Regs., title 23, § 2638(d), 2671, 2672; [State Water Board]

CORRECTIVE ACTION:

Do not implement the provisions of the LO that are less stringent or inconsistent with state law. If the CUPA plans to make any additional changes to the LO that modify the construction, monitoring, or testing provisions to California Code of Regulations, title 23, chapter 16, the CUPA will provide the revised LO to the State Water Board for review.

By the 1st Progress Report, and with each subsequent Progress Report until the Deficiency is acknowledged by CalEPA as being corrected, provide an update on the status of adopting or repealing the revised LO.

2. DEFICIENCY: CORRECTED DURING EVALUATION

The CUPA has not inspected 43 of 167 (26%) APSA tank facilities that store 10,000 gallons or more of petroleum at least once every three years for compliance with Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan requirements, including 4 that have never been inspected. See the list of facilities that were not inspected in Attachment 1.

The CUPA has not ensured the Riverside City Fire Department Participating Agency (PA) has inspected all APSA tank facilities that store 10,000 gallons or more of petroleum at least once every three years for compliance with SPCC Plan requirements, including 1 that has never been inspected:

- CERS ID 10841866: APSA tank facility never inspected

CITATION(S):

Health & Saf. Code, § 25270.5, subd. (a); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 27, §§ 15200, subd. (a)(2) and (c); 15280(a); 15290(d)(1) and (2); [OSFM]

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CORRECTIVE ACTION: COMPLETED

During the evaluation, the CUPA inspected 13 of 43 APSA tank facilities identified in Attachment 1; 30 facilities remain uninspected. The Riverside City Fire Department PA inspected the one uninspected facility. This Deficiency is considered corrected.

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INCIDENTAL FINDINGS REQUIRING RESOLUTION

“Incidental finding is a minor deviation in implementation of one or more Unified Program elements from the expected standards set forth in statute or regulation. It is a limited, non-systemic problem.” (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 27, § 15110, subd. (f).) In addition, recommendations may be provided.

1. INCIDENTAL FINDING:

The CUPA has not consistently cited and/or required the correction of construction UST violations identified in State Water Board Local Guidance (LG) Letter 150-3 dated February 2021.

UST Facility/Tank Data Download report (July 2, 2025) indicates:

- USTs with single-walled vent or riser piping utilizing the Overfill Prevention Equipment (OPE) exemption:
 - See Attachment 2
- UST system(s) installed between July 1, 1987, and June 30, 2003, with single-walled vent and/or riser/fill piping and equipped with only audible/visual alarms with no ball float or fill tube shut-off valve:
 - See Attachment 3

CITATION(s):

Cal. Code Regs., tit. 23, §§ 2635, subd. (d), 2636, subd. (a), and/or 2665, subd. (c); [State Water Board]

RESOLUTION:

Ensure UST owners/operators of each facility identified in Attachments 2 and 3 installs and corrects OPE or secondarily contains vent and riser piping and apply enforcement (e.g., revocation of UST Permit and issuance of red tag), as established in the I&E Plan for facilities that do not obtain compliance. Ensure RTC and enforcement actions are reported to CERS.

By the 1st Progress Report, and with each subsequent Progress Report until the Incidental Finding is acknowledged by CalEPA as being corrected, submit a list of UST facilities utilizing the incorrect or incomplete OPE construction including CERS Tank IDs.

During each Progress Report until the Incidental Finding is acknowledged by CalEPA as being corrected, the State Water Board will review information submitted by the CUPA and in CERS to verify each UST has the correct method of OPE installed or vent and riser piping is secondarily contained.

2. INCIDENTAL FINDING:

The CUPA has not ensured the Riverside City Fire Department PA ensures each HMBP submittal contains all required elements before being accepted in CERS:

- CERS ID 10525672
 - Inventory submitted on January 31, 2025
 - Inventory indicates less than 1,320 gallons of petroleum
 - An APSA submittal, dated September 12, 2019, indicates the inventory is missing more than 41,000 gallons of petroleum (such as diesel, engine oil, gasoline, hydraulic oil, motor oil, transmission fluid, and waste oil) in 55-gallon or larger aboveground storage tanks or containers

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- APSA Facility Information submitted on January 31, 2025, indicates 58,978 gallons of total aboveground storage capacity of petroleum

CITATION(s):

Health & Saf. Code, §§ 25270.6, subd. (a)(2), 25508, subds. (a)(3) & (4), Cal. Code Regs., tit. 27, §15280(a); [OSFM]

RESOLUTION:

Ensure the Riverside City Fire Department PA ensures each HMBP submittal contains all required elements before being accepted in CERS. During each on-site HMBP inspection, ensure the Riverside City Fire Department PA verifies whether the information in the HMBP is accurate.

During each Progress Report until the Incidental Finding is acknowledged by CalEPA as being corrected, OSFM will review 3 recently accepted HMBP submittals to verify each HMBP containing all required elements.

By the 1st Progress Report, follow-up with the Riverside City Fire Department to ensure the APSA tank facility identified above submits a complete HMBP to CERS or applies enforcement.

OSFM recommends that the CUPA:

- Ensure the Riverside City Fire Department PA ensures each HMBP submittal contains all required elements before being accepted in CERS and verifies whether the information in the HMBP is accurate during each on-site HMBP inspection conducted.
- Have the Riverside City Fire Department PA staff complete refresher training on HMBP submittal requirements.

3. INCIDENTAL FINDING: CORRECTED DURING EVALUATION

The CUPA has not inspected 11 of 83 (13%) facilities subject to the CalARP Program at least once every three years. See the list of facilities that were not inspected in Attachment 4.

CITATION(s):

Health & Saf. Code, § 25537, subd. (a); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 19, § 5140.4; [CalEPA]

RESOLUTION: COMPLETED

During the evaluation, the CUPA inspected 11 of 11 facilities identified in Attachment 4. This Incidental Finding is considered corrected.

CalEPA recommends that the CUPA:

- Determine why the inspection frequency was not met and establish processes and/or secure resources to prevent this from reoccurring.
- Prioritize the inspections that are the most overdue and/or based on risk to public health, safety, and the environment.

4. INCIDENTAL FINDING: CORRECTED DURING EVALUATION

The CUPA has not inspected 748 of 5,387 (13%) facilities subject to the HMBP Program at least once every three years. See the list of facilities that were not inspected in Attachment 5.

CITATION(S):

Health & Saf. Code, § 25511, subd. (b); [CalEPA]

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RESOLUTION: COMPLETED

During the evaluation, the CUPA inspected 533 of 748 facilities identified in Attachment 5; 215 facilities remain uninspected. This Incidental Finding is considered corrected.

CalEPA recommends that the CUPA:

- Determine why the inspection frequency was not met and establish processes and/or secure resources to prevent this from reoccurring.
- Prioritize the inspections that are the most overdue and/or based on risk to public health, safety, and the environment.

5. INCIDENTAL FINDING: CORRECTED DURING EVALUATION

The CUPA has not ensured each APSA tank facility subject to HMBP reporting requirements has annually submitted an HMBP to CERS as identified in Attachment 6. In summary:

- 180 of 733 (25%) APSA tank facilities have not submitted a chemical inventory, including 9 that have never submitted.
- 182 of 733 (25%) APSA tank facilities have not submitted emergency response and employee training plans, including 8 that have never submitted.

CITATION(S)

Health & Saf. Code, §§ 25508, subd. (a)(1)(B), 25270.6, subd. (a); [OSFM]

RESOLUTION: COMPLETED

During the evaluation, 32 of 180 APSA tank facilities submitted a chemical inventory and 34 of 182 APSA tank facilities submitted emergency response and employee training plans. This Incidental Finding is considered corrected.

6. INCIDENTAL FINDING: CORRECTED DURING EVALUATION

The CUPA is not ensuring all USTs are in compliance with the design, construction, monitoring, and testing requirements.

- The following single-walled (SW) tank has not had an operating Automatic Tank Gauge (ATG):
 - CERS ID Tank ID 10318780-003
 - Note: The CUPA has required the tank to be emptied, however no plans for removal or closure in place were provided from 2021-2024

CITATION(S):

Cal. Code Regs., tit. 23, § 2643, subds. (b)(1); [State Water Board]

RESOLUTION: COMPLETED

During the evaluation, the CUPA provided an update regarding plans submitted for tank closure in August 2025.

Ensure UST owners/operators of the facility identified above is in compliance with design, construction, monitoring, and testing requirements, and apply enforcement (e.g., revocation of UST Permit and issuance of red tag), as established in the Inspection and Enforcement (I&E) Plan for facilities that do not obtain compliance. Ensure RTC and enforcement actions are reported to CERS.

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By the 1st Progress Report, and with each subsequent Progress Report until the Incidental Finding is acknowledged by CalEPA as being corrected.

7. INCIDENTAL FINDING: CORRECTED DURING EVALUATION

The CUPA has not consistently followed up and documented RTC information in CERS for APSA tank facilities cited with violations. The CUPA has not ensured the Riverside City Fire Department PA has consistently followed up and documented RTC information in CERS for APSA tank facilities cited with violations. See the list of facilities with violations having no documented RTC in Attachment 7.

As of June 23, 2025, there is no documented RTC for:

- CUPA:
 - 86 of 143 (60%) violations cited between July 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, including:
 - 9 violations cited for failure to prepare an SPCC Plan
 - 2 of 16 (13%) violations cited between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, for failure to prepare an SPCC Plan
 - 2 of 24 (8%) violations cited between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, for failure to prepare an SPCC Plan
- Riverside City Fire Department PA:
 - 112 of 146 (82%) violations cited between July 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, including:
 - 2 violations cited for failure to prepare an SPCC Plan

CITATION(s):

Health & Saf. Code, §§ 25270.4.5, subd. (a) & 25404.1.2, subd. (c); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 19, § 1612, subds. (d),] (e) & (f); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 27, §§ 15185, subds. (a)-(c), 15200, subds. (a)(2) & (c), 15280(a), 15290(d)(1) and (2)
[OSFM]

RESOLUTION: COMPLETED

During the evaluation, as of October 20, 2025:

- CUPA:
 - RTC was obtained for 71 APSA violations identified in Attachment 7, including all violations cited for failure to prepare an SPCC Plan; 19 have no documented RTC.

During the evaluation, as of February 9, 2026:

- Riverside City Fire Department PA:
 - RTC was obtained for 84 APSA violations identified in Attachment 7, including all violations cited for failure to prepare an SPCC Plan; 28 have no documented RTC.

ATTACHMENT(S)

To obtain a copy of any attachment(s) identified in the Final Summary of Findings Report, please contact CUPA@calepa.ca.gov.