

TAEP/ AWMA Joint Meeting

Normalization of the Abnormal: Looking at the Pandemic, the Economy, and the Regulatory Environment in Texas

Presented by: Dr. Latrice Babin – Director
Harris County Pollution Control Services Department



Harris County
Pollution Control

Pollution Control's Role

Established in 1953 by Harris County Commissioner's Court to work on water quality and air quality issues.

Pollution Control Service's mission is to ensuring clean air and water for the citizens of Harris County consistent with the protection of public health, enjoyment of property and the protection of plant, animal, and marine life.



Sections

- Administrative
- Communications
- Compliance Services
- Permits and Technical Services
- Emergency Response
- (Investigative) Field Services
- Laboratory Services
- Water–Wastewater/ Stormwater



Enforcement Authority

Harris County Stormwater Regulations

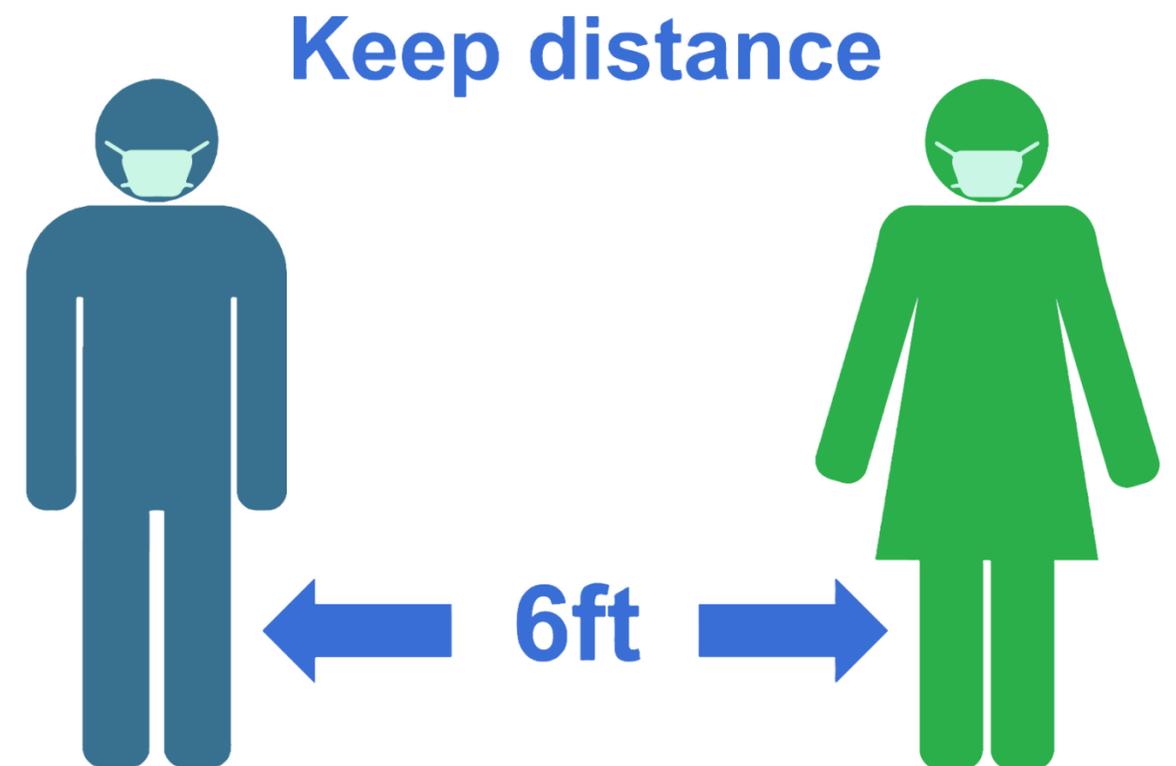
Statutory authority over certain TCEQ rules

- Chapter 361 Health and Safety Code
- Chapter 382 Health and Safety Code
- Chapter 26 Water Code
- Chapter 7 Water Code
- Sect. 351 Provides the authority for litigation



Social Distancing

- Business is conducted as usual with some modification
- All employees must always wear a mask at all times
- Investigators start out from home
- Paperwork – requested electronically

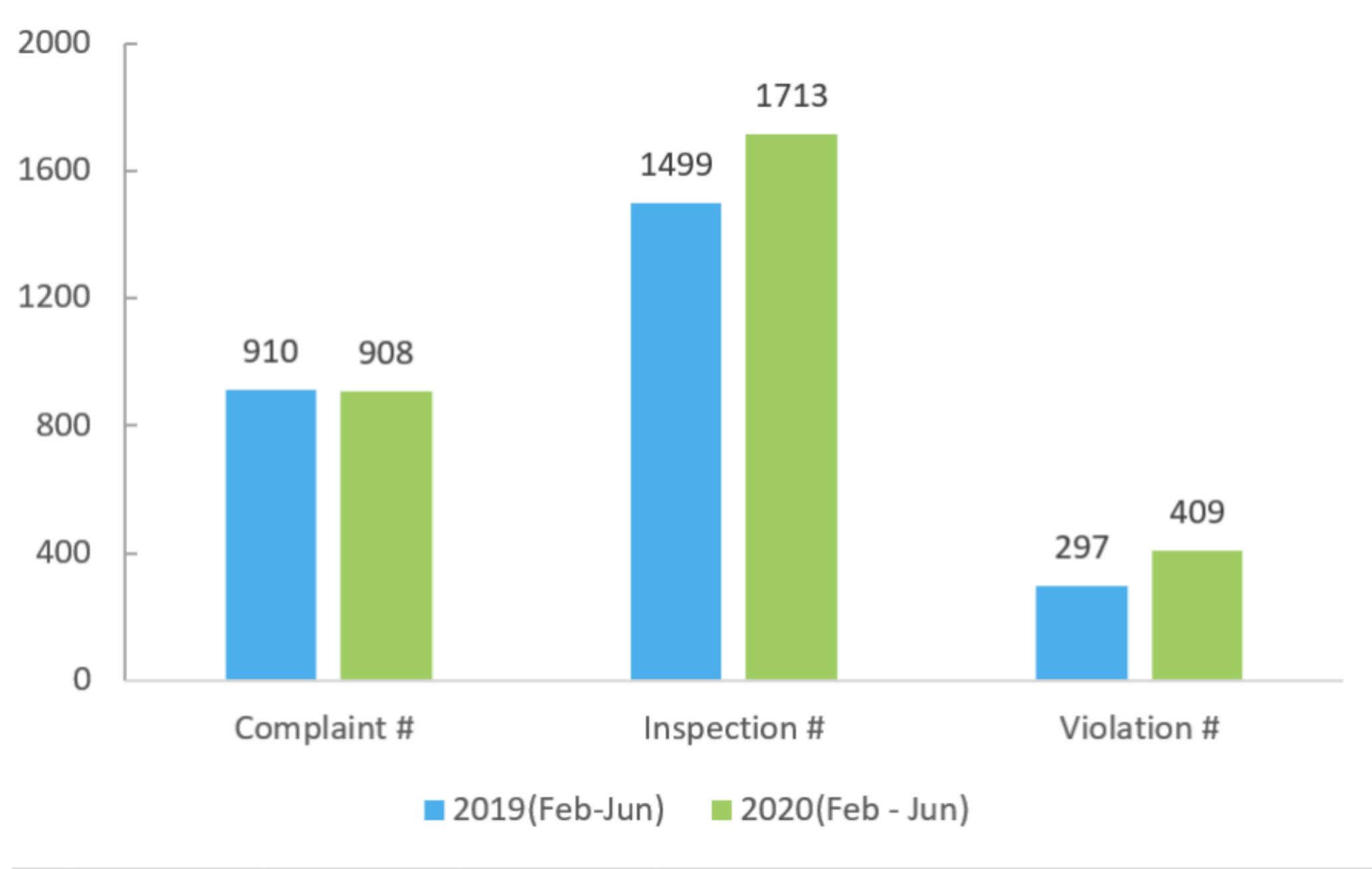


Staggered work locations

- Staff only allowed in office a max of two days
- Laboratory samples closely coordinated
- Training online and distanced for new employees



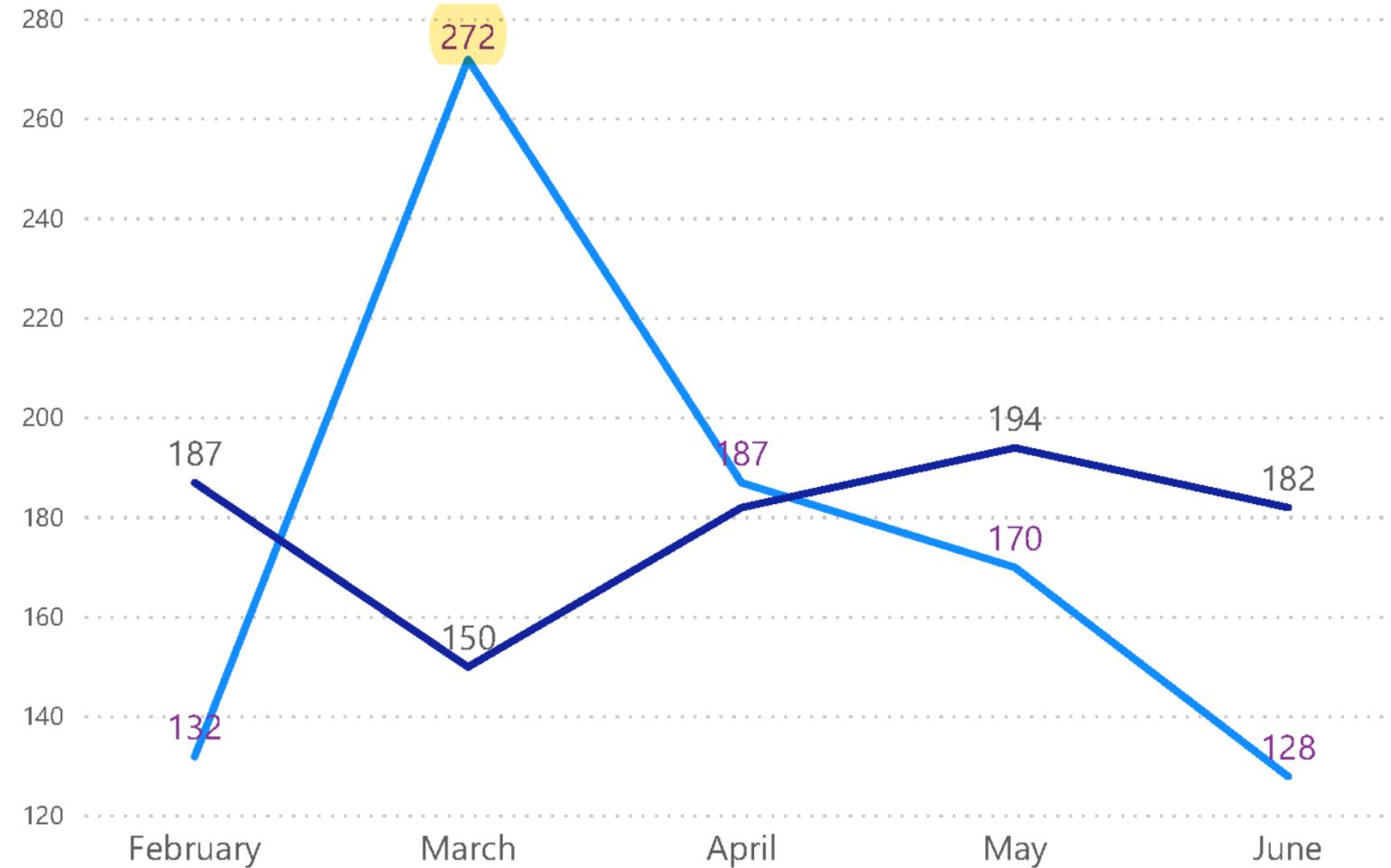
Complaints, Inspections and Violations 2019 (Feb-June) vs 2020 (Feb-June)



Most Complaints – 272 in March 2019

Complaint # by Year/ Month

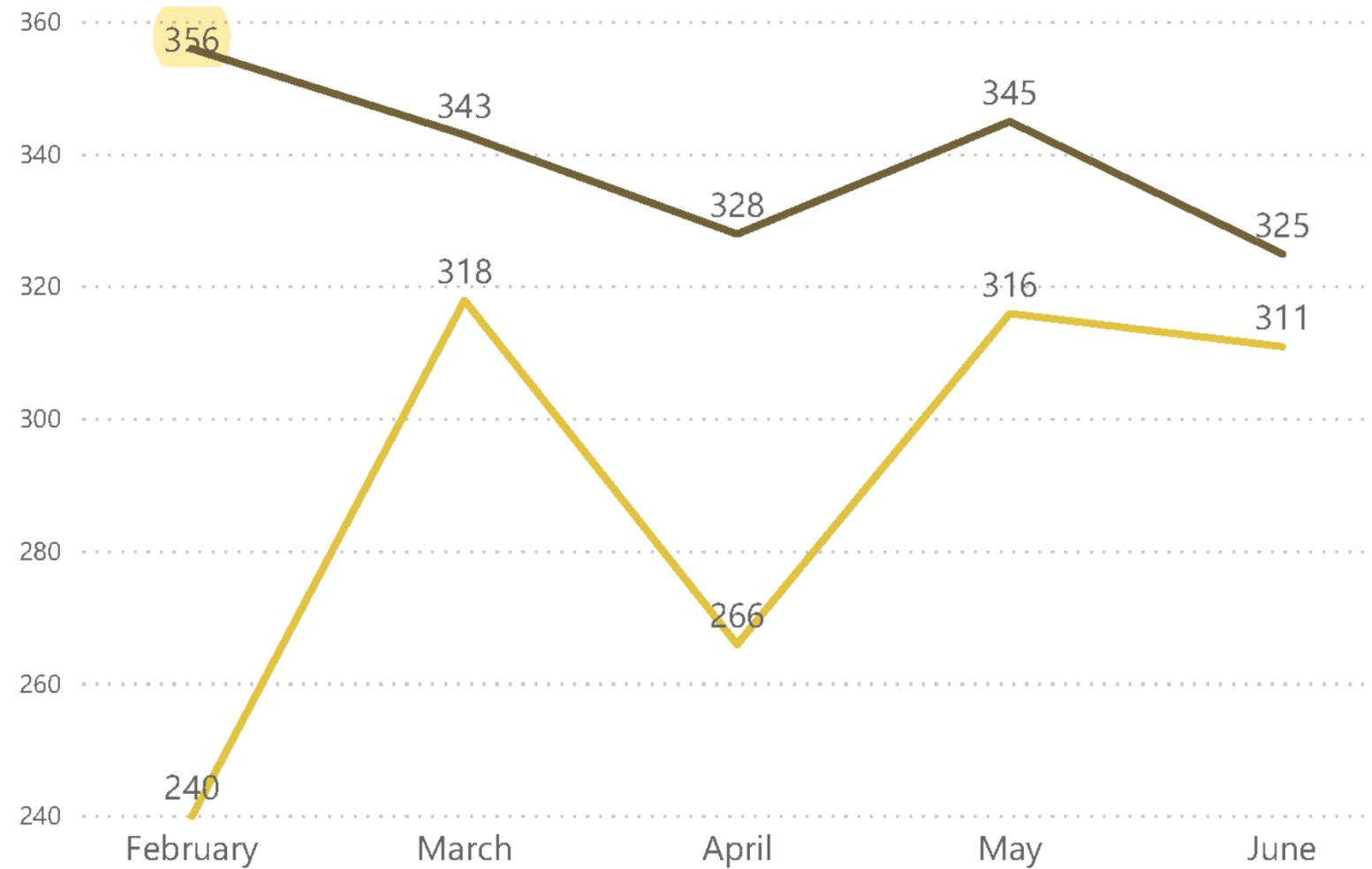
Year ● 2019 ● 2020



Most Inspections – 356 in Feb 2020

Inspection # by Year/ Month

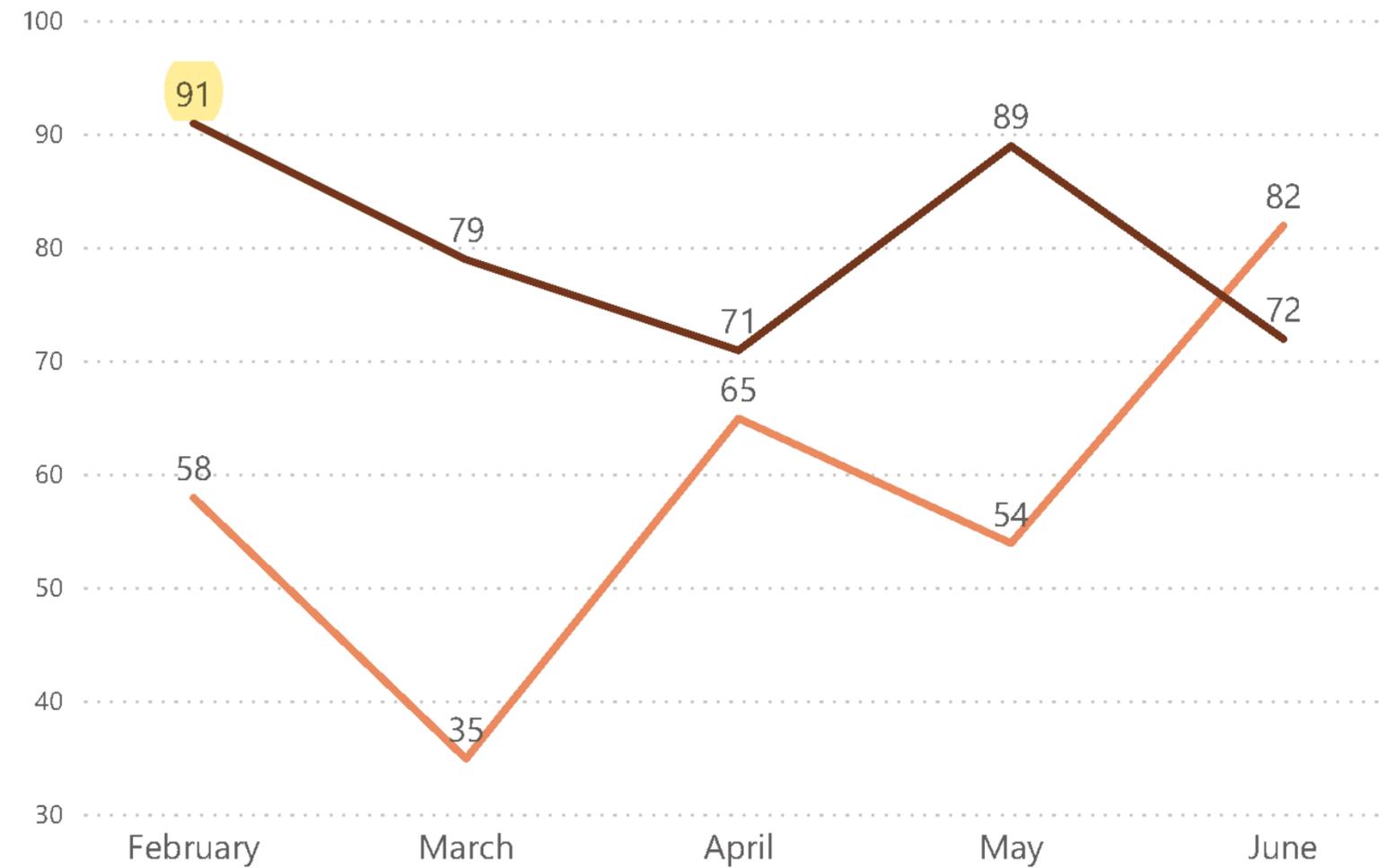
Year ● 2019 ● 2020



Most Violations – 91 in Feb 2020

Violation # by Year/ Month

Year ● 2019 ● 2020



Proactive Approach

- Increased concrete batch plant inspections
- Public engagement on comments
- Title V review
- Emission Event review increase



Financial outlook

- Harris County increased capital investment in PCS
 - Purchase of fleet for investigators
 - Purchase of monitoring equipment
 - Semi stationary
 - Hand-held
 - Data management platform
- Laboratory equipment upgrade
- Increase in staff



Evolution into the digital age

- Website Updates
- Communications Section
 - Increased use of software
 - Data management/ cartography
 - Newsletter (internal / external) development

The new PCS Complaint Form is now live

- Google Maps integration
- Convenient and easy-to-use
- Upload images



Contact us at **(713) 920-2831** or
pollution.control@pcs.hctx.net



PC Connections Internal Staff Newsletter

ISSUE 4 JULY 2020

PC CONNECTIONS

The official employee newsletter of Harris County Pollution Control Services

- IN THIS ISSUE
- ANNOUNCEMENT FROM DR. LATRICE BABIN
- EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH, NOMINEES & PROMOTION
- BIRTHDAYS & CALENDAR
- COVID-19 SURVEY & TRENDS
- NEW HIRE HIGHLIGHT



Announcement from Dr. Latrice Babin

Hello PCS Team,

I know we have all grown weary of the COVID-19 shut-down and the donning of masks and social restrictions. The thing is, COVID is not done posing problems. We have to stay vigilant and dedicated to protecting our families and our co-workers. I am dedicated to doing everything I can to keep us all as safe as possible. I had the survey developed to allow you an opportunity to express concerns and I read every comment. I will always stress safety, but we still have a job to do: responding to and mitigating environmental non-compliance issues. Until further notice, we will continue the current work plan, but we will make preparations to return to the office in some capacity when it is safe to do so.

Take care!

Employee of the Month Bill Everett - ER Section

As an Emergency Response Specialist, Bill Everett is well experienced and knowledgeable in what he does at PCS and is a valuable asset to the ER team. Craig Hill describes Bill as going "above and beyond in making sure that complaints and ER calls are completed 100%." Not only does Bill excel in his tasks, but he also brings joy to the office with his push for comradery amongst his team and Red Shirt Friday.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH NOMINEES

KAYLA ROMAN - COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

PATTY CANGAS - ADMIN SECTION

DENISSE MUNIZ - WATER SECTION

From all of us at PCS we would like to congratulate Nicolina Fraietta on her new promotion as Emissions Event Specialist!

Calendar

Upcoming Events

- July 4 - Independence Day



Birthdays

Upcoming Birthdays

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| July 1 - Kayla Roman | July 1 - Maritza Rojas Martini | July 2 - Evirgia Stewart |
| July 4 - Maria Vasquez | July 28 - Janal Wyatt | July 29 - Tony Tomlinson |

COVID-19 Quarantine Trends



Tiger King is Netflix's most in-demand true-crime series ever with over 34 million viewers.



As of May 7, 2020, Animal Crossing: New Horizons has sold over 13.41 million copies.



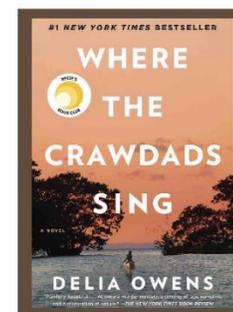
The game company Iley Buddy Iley Pal's Amazon sales were up 4,000% in the last week of March and in-store sales at Walmart were up 100%, according to Forbes.



Beyond the increased traffic to recipe sites, sales in food categories related to cooking and baking at home are up, such as pasta and pizza sauces, soups, baking mixes, and flours.



TikTok is the place to be right now with 175 million downloads in the U.S. The app is currently #3 on the Apple App Store's Top Charts above Youtube, Instagram, and Facebook.



The top 3 best selling books of 2020 so far on Amazon.com are Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens, My First Learn to Write Workbook by Crystal Radke, and The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes by Suzanne Collins.

COVID-19 Survey Results



65%

of staff think working effectively these days is easy and not difficult



72.5%

of staff are worried about the impact of Covid-19 on the job or personally



80%

of staff think the current work-from-home arrangements could maintain 2 months or longer



90%

of staff believes their coworkers can work effectively in a virtual team environment

Biggest culture challenge to working effectively in a virtual team



37.5%

#1 The loss of face to face interaction



22.5%

#2 Maintaining performance/productivity



15%

#3 A loss of shared purpose/team spirit

The Leaf External Quarterly Newsletter

APRIL, 2020, ISSUE 1

THE LEAF

The Official Newsletter of Harris County Pollution Control Services

IN THIS ISSUE

AT YOUR SERVICE:
LEARN MORE ABOUT
OUR ENVIRONMENTAL
COMPLAINT LINE

WHAT IS A
CONCRETE
BATCH PLANT?

MEET THE DEFENDERS:
THE PCS EMERGENCY
RESPONSE TEAM



At Your Service: Learn About Our Complaint Line

Pollution Control Services (PCS) is here to help residents of Harris County. We offer a complaint line to residents who have witnessed forms of pollution such as illegal dumping and burning. The complaint line is one of our primary sources of information for environmental issues as residents are our eyes and ears in their communities.

Complaints made through the line are acknowledged with a field investigation. Most complaints are resolved through the investigator discussing the violation with the subject causing pollution, and the issuance of a Violation Notice which details the law and regulations violated. The focus is assuring that all documented violations of Texas environmental laws and regulations are resolved.

We communicate with residents of Harris County about actions that were taken regarding complaints, so there is always two-way communication. Our goal is for residents to know that all complaints are taken seriously. By receiving complaints, we are then able to identify what environmental issues need to be improved in the community.

Contact the complaint line at (713) 920-2831 or pollution.control@pcs.hctx.net. Visit our website at pcs.harriscountytexas.gov.

What Is A Concrete Batch Plant?

A concrete batch plant uses equipment to combine ingredients into concrete. The list of ingredients commonly include sand, rocks, and fly ash. In Harris County, there are currently 139 operating concrete batch plants. These plants can be a source of pollution if not properly operated or appropriately following standards and laws.

The Hazards of Concrete Batch Plants in Your Neighborhood



Particulate matter is a health concern

Exposure can affect both your lungs and your heart. Numerous scientific studies have linked particle pollution exposure to a variety of problems, including:



- Premature death in people with heart or lung disease,
- Non fatal heart attacks,
- Irregular heartbeat,
- Aggravated asthma,
- Decreased lung function,
- Increased respiratory symptoms, such as irritation of the airways, coughing or difficulty breathing.



Exposure to pollution

People with heart or lung diseases, children, and older adults are most likely to be affected by particle pollution exposure.



Environmental Impact

Fine particles (PM2.5) are the main cause of reduced visibility (haze) in parts of the United States



Be Informed

"Do you know if there is a concrete batch plant in your community?"

"Health and Environmental Effects of Particulate Matter (PM)," April 2020, United States Environmental Protection Agency.



Meet the Defenders: The PCS Emergency Response Team



Meet the Defenders: The PCS Emergency Response Team

Harris County Pollution Control Services Emergency Response Team provides services to citizens by responding to hazardous material incidents that affect Harris County and evaluating their impact on the environment and the public. The team also ensures that any clean up and remediation required by the incident is performed.

Our Emergency Response Team consists of eight staff with the following roles: Emergency Response Manager, Emergency Response Supervisor, Emergency Response Specialists, and Monitoring and Surveillance Specialists. The Emergency Response Team's purpose is to respond to environmental emergencies, collect air quality data in the field and determine violations of law. They are trained to protect residents of Harris County against threats such as hazardous material spills and conduct disaster relief.

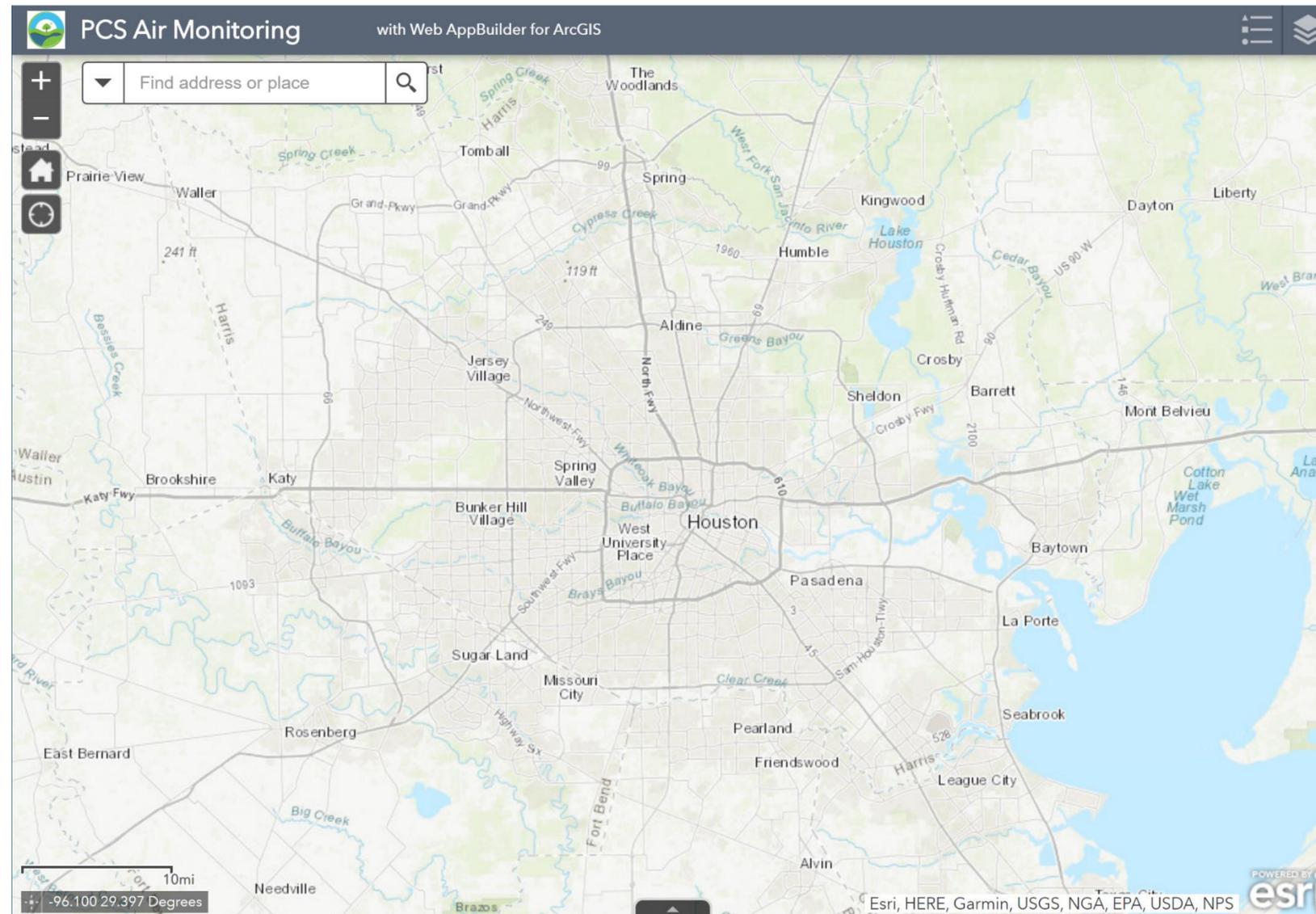
There are several different examples of incident notifications the Emergency Response Team receives through our complaint line, but the two primary leading examples are investigating roadway hazmat spills and controlled/non-controlled releases from facilities. These incidents can have an impact on the environment, public health, and enjoyment of property. Direct human contact with pollution can worsen chronic illnesses, which is especially harmful to sensitive populations such as the elderly, pregnant women, and those suffering from respiratory disease.

The Emergency Response Team partners with agencies within Harris County, such as the Commissioners' Precincts, Flood Control District, Homeland Security & Emergency Management, and the Fire Marshal's Office. After an incident is reported to the Emergency Response Team, specific steps are taken to respond to the emergency. First, the team must gather all the information they can regarding an incident, which allows them to determine what resources, information, and protection are needed for safety. The Emergency Response Team then arrives on the scene, measures the impact of the incident, and weighs the risk of pollution. The Emergency Response Team then relays the primary information to decision-makers.

The Emergency Response Team's main goal is to serve the residents of Harris County. With your help, the Emergency Response Team can continue to keep our environment safe against hazardous materials and pollution. If you witness an environmental concern, please contact the Harris County Pollution Control Services complaint line at 713-920-2831 or email us at pollution.control@pcs.hctx.com.

Monitoring/ ER

- Survey 123



General

- Online complaint form
- ZOOM video conference
- Microsoft TEAMS



Thank You! 

Dr. Latrice Babin – Director | Pollution Control Services Department Services

Latrice.babin@pcs.hctx.net

713-274-6433

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