



# Nevada test looms as UTEP Miners football fights to steady itself

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# El Paso Times

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# Marathon finally speaks on Aug. 4 fume incident



## Trust gap remains after officials give apology while describing what caused the discharge

**Vic Kolenc**  
El Paso Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TEXAS

Marathon Petroleum officials told the public, for the first time, the story of what caused the 97-year-old refinery to release thousands of pounds of pollutants on the night of Aug. 4, creating strong odors and noxious fumes in surrounding neighborhoods and beyond, with some people reporting illness.

Several Marathon refinery officials apologized to the public on Tuesday, Oct. 6, during a Marathon-hosted meeting with about 100 people in the Riverside High School auditorium in the Lower Valley.

A few hecklers repeatedly interrupted Marathon's presentation. No public comments were allowed during the meeting. Company officials did not grant interviews to news reporters.

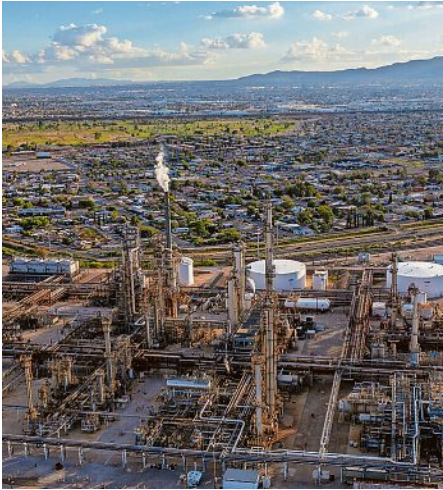
Marathon officials provided a complex slideshow to explain what hap-

pened when a key refinery component shut down at 3 p.m. on Aug. 4 because of an electrical issue, causing a cascade of events that, they said, led to smelly hydrocarbon emissions from a damaged startup tank that lasted until 9:20 p.m. The tank contained liquefied petroleum gas and gasoline.

"Obviously it's not how we operate. We hold ourselves to a much higher standard, and we failed that night," said Brian Haas, refining operations director who provided details about the equipment problems.

Les Davis, the refinery general manager, said, "We followed the (refinery) emergency response plan very well. . . . However, there is nothing that happened on Aug. 4 that we're happy about or proud about or content with. We think there's a lot of things that we have learned from this that we can get better at."

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**ABOVE: The Marathon Petroleum refinery is seen beyond a residential neighborhood in El Paso on Oct. 6. An Aug. 4 emissions event released thousands of pounds of pollutants. Residents continue to raise concerns about the incident. TOP: Residents hold signs opposing the refinery during a community meeting at Riverside High School in El Paso on Oct. 6.**

PHOTOS BY OMAR ORNELAS/EL PASO TIMES



**Work is in progress at the Canyon Creek business park, as seen July 17, being built on 23 acres at Resler and Helen of Troy drives in far West El Paso. VIC KOLENC/EL PASO TIMES**

# 2 major road extensions aim to cut congestion

**Maria Cortes Gonzalez**  
El Paso Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TEXAS

The city of El Paso is extending two major thoroughfares, Resler Drive and Montwood Drive, creating new connections to improve congestion on the West Side and East Side areas.

The Resler Drive Extension, a \$12.6 million project, will extend from the dead end of Resler Drive at Dewberry Drive to Loop 375. The project will encompass about half a mile, creating a four-lane divided roadway.

The project is good news for the Enchanted Hills community of 600 homes, which currently has only two entrances. Residents have been asking for the Resler connection because of traffic bottlenecks around Loop 375, according to previous news reports.

The new road, which is expected to begin work in the fall, will add another connection to the loop. The project will include intersection improvements, street lighting, shared-use paths and ADA ramps, landscaping, bicycle facilities, and public art.

Construction crews have started behind-the-scenes preparation work, which will take several weeks. Construction is expected to take approximately 13 months, with completion anticipated in winter 2027, city officials said in a release.

## City breaks ground on Montwood Drive Extension

The city of El Paso recently broke ground on the Montwood Drive extension project. The \$18.2 million

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# Texas comptroller to review EPISD spending

**Daniel Perez**  
El Paso Matters

The Texas Comptroller's Office has included El Paso Independent School District among four institutions picked for "a detailed review" to examine if they spend state funds in compliance with state law.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott requested a review process in August to ensure that districts spend state funds on students, classrooms and teachers and not on more administration or what he called "non-instructional bureaucracy."

Comptroller Don Huffines said in an Oct. 5 news release that his office was committed to providing a clear assessment of how the state's education dollars are used. The office also will review the Austin, Prosper (north of Dallas) and

Barbers Hill (east of Houston) school districts.

"This review is an important step to ensure transparency, accountability, and the responsible use of public funds," Huffines said.

EPISD officials in an emailed response late Tuesday pointed to the recent academic gains in TEA accountability ratings and how it reflects on the district's commitment to student success and directing resources to the classroom.

The district's email mentioned its combined efforts to reduce expenses such as 326 central-office and non-campus positions, eliminated vacancies, reassessed contracts, streamlined operating expenses and stronger financial controls.

Additionally, the spokesperson pointed to the Financial Budget Dashboard

and the district's Financial Stability Plan as the district's latest efforts to be transparent and improve efficiency.

It is unknown when EPISD was informed about the upcoming review and which departments might be involved in the comptroller's review.

EPISD last school year spent just about 11% of its budget on leadership and general administration, according to Texas Education Agency data. The Ysleta Independent School District also spent about 11% on leadership and administration, while the Socorro Independent School District was at about 10%.

Leah Hanany, the president of the district's board of trustees, did not respond to an El Paso Matters request for

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**Texas Comptroller Don Huffines said in an Oct. 5 news release that his office was committed to providing a clear assessment of how the state's education dollars are used. The office selected El Paso Independent School District among four districts for a "detailed review," along with Austin, Prosper (north of Dallas) and Barbers Hill (east of Houston) school districts. GABY VELASQUEZ/EL PASO TIMES**

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