

ELON MUSK'S SPACEX IS DESTROYING OUR PLANET WITH HIS POLLUTION

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SpaceX horribly polluted waters in Texas this year, regulators found

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Key Points

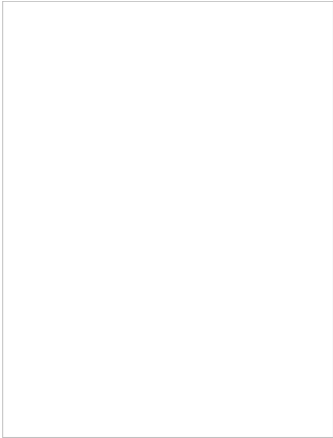
- Elon Musk's SpaceX violated environmental regulations in releasing pollutants into or nearby bodies of water in Texas, a state environmental agency said in a notice last week.
- The report from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) came five months after the Environmental Protection Agency also notified SpaceX that it had violated the Clean Water Act.
- The violations could threaten SpaceX's ambitions to increase Starship launches from its Starbase facility in South Texas.

SpaceX's Starship launches its fourth flight test from the company's Boca Chica launchpad, designed to eventually send astronauts to the moon and beyond, near Brownsville, Texas, U.S. , in this handout picture obtained on June 6, 2024.
Spacex | Via Reuters

[Elon Musk's](#) SpaceX violated environmental regulations by repeatedly releasing pollutants into or near bodies of water in Texas, a state agency said in a notice of violation focused on the company's water deluge system at its Starbase launch facility.
The notice from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) last week came five months after the Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 office, which covers Texas and surrounding states, had also informed SpaceX that it violated the Clean Water Act with the same type of activity.



The notices and related investigative records, obtained by CNBC, have not been previously reported.
TCEQ said its agency's office in the South Texas city of Harlingen, near Starbase in Boca Chica, received a complaint on Aug. 6, 2023, alleging that SpaceX "was discharging deluge water without TCEQ authorization."
"In total, the Harlingen region received 14 complaints alleging environmental impacts from the Facility's deluge system," the regulator said in the document.
Aerospace companies, including SpaceX, generally need to be in compliance with state and federal laws to gain approval from the [Federal Aviation Administration](#) for future launches. SpaceX was seeking permission to conduct up to 25 annual launches and landings of its Starship spacecraft and Super Heavy rocket at its Boca Chica facility. Notices of violation could delay those approvals and result in civil monetary penalties for SpaceX, further probes and criminal charges.
In a [lengthy post on X](#), following publication of this story, SpaceX said regulators have told the company that it can continue with launch operations despite the violation notices.



"Throughout our ongoing coordination with both TCEQ and the EPA, we have explicitly asked if operation of the deluge system needed to stop and we were informed that operations could continue," SpaceX wrote on X.
Neither regulator answered CNBC's questions regarding SpaceX's statement.



watch now

VIDEO00:56
Elon Musk: SpaceX will move its headquarters from California to Texas

A rush to rebuild

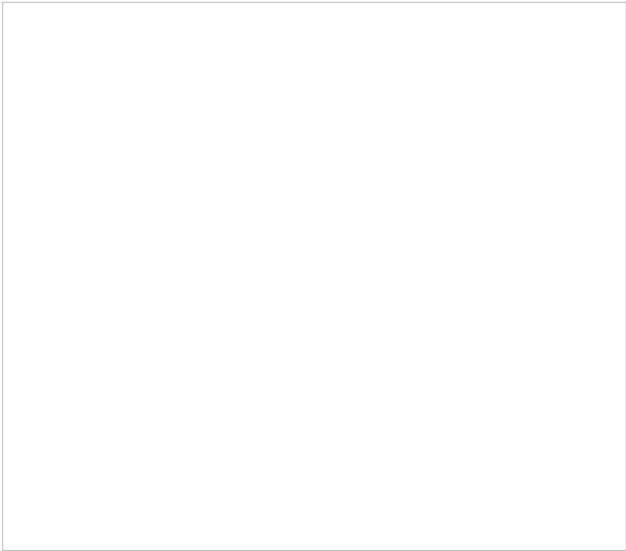
On July 25, 2024, an environmental investigator with TCEQ "conducted an in-house compliance record review" to determine SpaceX's compliance with wastewater regulations. The investigation found that SpaceX discharged industrial wastewater without a permit four times between March and July of this year.

Water deluge systems with flame defectors diffuse heat, sound and energy generated by orbital test flights and rocket launches. But SpaceX didn't build that system into its launch site at Boca Chica before it began test flights of the largest rocket ever, Starship.

SpaceX is developing Starship to transport people and equipment to the moon and, if Musk eventually realizes his grand vision, to colonize Mars. In its first test flight of Starship in April 2023, energy from the rocket caused SpaceX's concrete launchpad to explode, and its spacecraft also blew up in mid-air.

Chunks of concrete were hurled into a nesting and migration site important to some endangered species nearby and a 3.5-acre fire chewed through Boca Chica State Park Land south of the launchpad. In response, environmental groups filed a lawsuit against SpaceX and the FAA, which had authorized its launches.

With Musk pushing for another orbital test flight within one to two months, SpaceX rushed to rebuild the launchpad installing a new water deluge system to keep it from exploding again. The company bypassed a permitting process, according to the regulators, which would have required it to meet pollutant discharge limits, and say how it would treat its wastewater.



SpaceX ran its first [full-pressure test](#) of the water deluge system in July 2023. About a month later, on Aug. 25, 2023, the EPA initiated a probe and requested information from the company regarding its wastewater discharges and more.

The agency issued a formal notice of violation to SpaceX on March 13, according to records obtained by CNBC.

On March 14, despite receiving the EPA notice a day earlier, SpaceX pressed ahead with its [third test flight](#) of Starship, again using its unauthorized water deluge system at the launch site.

The company hit new milestones with the test flight and Musk appeared triumphant. NASA chief Bill Nelson congratulated SpaceX on "a successful test flight!" although the rocket was lost during its descent above the Indian Ocean.

Environmental engineer Eric Roesch, whose [ESG Hound blog](#) focuses on business and sustainability, predicted SpaceX would need a water deluge system at the launchpad even before the first test flight of Starship. He was also among the first to call out SpaceX for using such a system without proper permits.

Once the agencies had informed SpaceX it was in violation of environmental regulations, continuing with launch operations at Starbase put the company at greater legal risk, Roesch said in an interview.

"Further wastewater discharges could trigger more investigations and criminal charges for the company or any of the people involved in authorizing the launches," he said.



The Federal Aviation Administration said Wednesday that SpaceX is not yet clear for another test flight of its Starship Super Heavy launch vehicle.
The Washington Post | The Washington Post | Getty Images

Years of violations

Roesch also pointed out that after receiving a notice of violation from the EPA, SpaceX was required to apply for a permit within 30 days. The company didn't submit its application until July 1, about 110 days later, according to a copy of its application made available through the TCEQ's public records office.

"They've been violating wastewater regulations for years, and they continue to do so seemingly with the FAA's blessing," Roesch said.

In its statement on Monday, SpaceX wrote that the deluge system "causes no harm to the environment." The company said other permits obtained by SpaceX serve as authorization for its use.

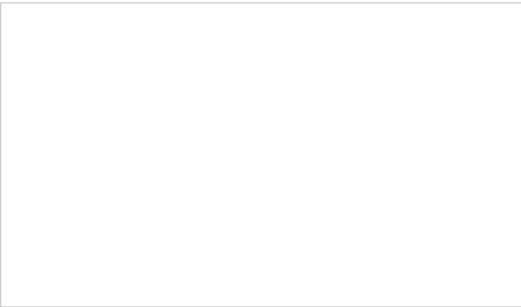
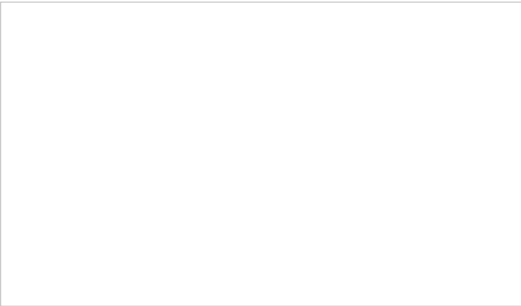
Kenneth Teague, a coastal ecologist based outside of Austin, evaluated the 483-page [SpaceX permit application](#). Teague, who has more than three decades of water quality and coastal planning experience, told CNBC the application was full of holes, missing basic details about water discharge volumes, the temperature of the effluent and outfall locations.

Teague said he's especially concerned about the concentration of mercury in the wastewater from the SpaceX water deluge system. The levels disclosed in the document represent "very large exceedances of the mercury water quality criteria," Teague said.

According to the [U.S. Geological Survey](#), mercury is "one of the most serious contaminants threatening our nation's waters because it is a potent neurological poison in fish, wildlife, and humans."

Teague said high temperature discharges, and pollutants like mercury in high concentrations, could cause "significant negative impacts," like killing off the "little critters" that make up seabirds' diet.

"The SpaceX application fails to address this very serious concern," he said.



SpaceX said in its response on X that there were "no detectable levels of mercury" found in its samples. But SpaceX wrote in its permit application that its mercury concentration at one outfall location was 113 micrograms per liter. Water quality criteria in the state calls for levels no higher than 2.1 micrograms per liter for acute aquatic toxicity and much lower levels for human health.

CNBC reached out to the FAA on Friday. The agency didn't provide a comment for this story but announced on Monday that it's postponing public meetings that had been planned for this week. The meetings were for an environmental assessment for "SpaceX's plan to increase the launches and landings of its Starship/Super Heavy vehicles scheduled at the Boca Chica Launch Site in Cameron County, Texas."

The FAA didn't provide a reason for the postponements and said new dates will be announced in the future.

A Reminder of Just Some of the Terrible Things Elon Musk Has Said and Done

From regularly attacking his perceived enemies to running a company accused of rampant racism and sexism, it's not hard to see why so many people are up in arms about him taking over Twitter.

By [Bess Levin](#)



13 August 2021, Brandenburg, GrÃ¼nheide: Elon Musk, Tesla CEO, stands in the foundry of the Tesla Gigafactory during a press event. The first vehicles are scheduled to roll off the production line in GrÃ¼nheide near Berlin from the end of 2021. The US company plans to build around 500,000 units of the compact Model 3 and Model Y series here each year. Photo: Patrick Pleul/dpa-Zentralbild/ZB (Photo by Patrick Pleul/picture alliance via Getty Images)/picture alliance

Like [the employees of Twitter](#), who reportedly reacted to yesterday's [news](#) with "shock and dismay," a lot of people are not enthused about the idea of **Elon Musk** buying the social media network. But now, he is, and if you're not familiar with the guy, or just think of him as the dude who sells electric cars and is really into space, you might be wondering why so many people are up in arms. And the answer is: He's a huge jerk! Who regularly uses his massive platform and other sources of power to do bad things!

Online, those things have included:

- Claiming in March 2020 that people worried about the coronavirus were "[dumb](#)"
- Predicting on March 19, 2020, that the U.S. was going to have "[close to zero new cases](#)" by the end of April
- Questioning the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines, and baselessly asserting that there were "[quite a few negative reactions](#)" to getting a second shot
- Likening Canadian prime minister [Justin Trudeau](#) [to Hitler](#)
- Saying the U.S. government shouldn't provide subsidies to companies [after receiving billions in subsidies from the U.S government](#)
- Using Twitter to [engage in securities fraud](#)
- Tweeting, "[Propouns suck](#)"
- Tweeting [misogynistic things](#) at Senator **Elizabeth Warren** because she said he should pay more in taxes
- Writing to [Bernie Sanders](#), who also thinks the richest man in the world should pay more in taxes, "[I keep forgetting that you're still alive](#)"
- Tweeting [dumb, sexist jokes](#)
- Tweeting a photo of **Bill Gates** and [writing](#), "in case u need to lose a boner fast"
- Tweeting in 2018 that Tesla factory workers could lose their stock options [if they unionized](#)

- Baselessly accusing a British cave diver instrumental in rescuing a trapped football team of being a "pedo guy" because he, [like others](#), said Musk's idea to send in a submarine wouldn't work

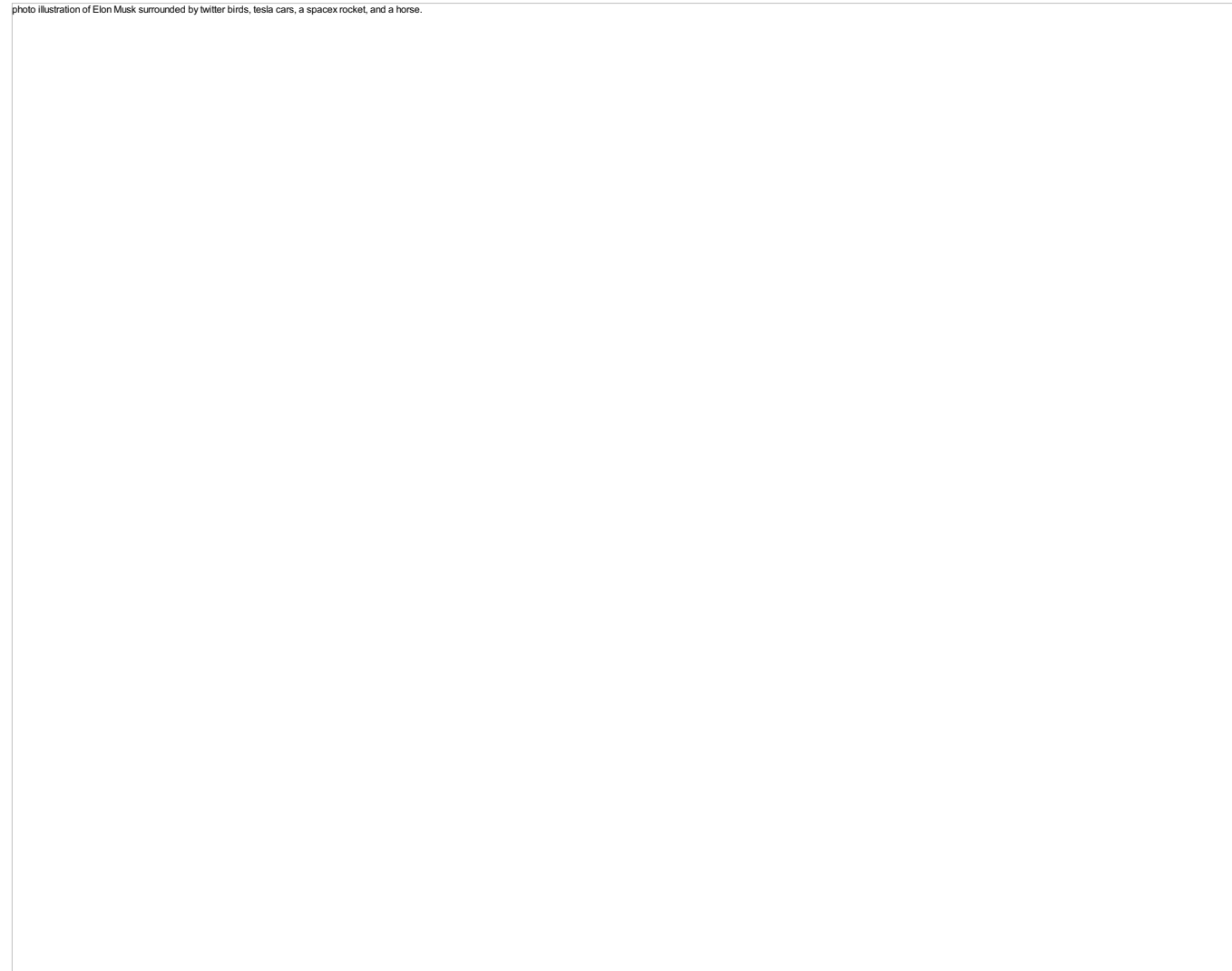
While off-line, and more consequentially:

- Reopening a Tesla factory [in violation of public health orders](#), where 450 cases were subsequently recorded
- Running a company (Tesla) that was [ordered](#) to pay nearly \$137 million to a former Black employee who said the company ignored repeated complaints that he was called the N-word and that his colleagues "had drawn swastikas and scratched a racial epithet in a bathroom stall and left drawings of derogatory caricatures of Black children around the factory." (In a [message](#) to Tesla employees, a human resources executive downplayed the man's allegations, noting he was a contractor, not a full-time staffer, and that other witnesses had said that while they heard racial slurs, they were used in a "friendly" manner. The H.R. executive added that the company was "not perfect" at the time of the incidents, and "is still not perfect," but has "come a long way.")
- Running a company (Tesla), where a female worker [said](#) sexual harassment was "rampant," alleging "nightmarish conditions" and a factory that "more resembles a crude, archaic construction site or frat house than a cutting-edge company in the heart of the progressive San Francisco Bay area." (The company did not respond to multiple requests for comment from *The Washington Post*, which noted Tesla "does not typically respond to press inquiries.")
- Running a company (Tesla) that employees have called a "[modern-day sweatshop](#)" (In response, Telsa said it abided by California laws.)
- Attempting to "[destroy a Tesla whistleblower](#)"
- Reportedly [exploding at](#) "executives and lower-ranking workers" alike, and allegedly [firing people who disagreed with him](#) (Musk has denied allegations that he goes on firing sprees)
- Announcing Tesla's headquarters would move to Texas one month after the state effectively [banned](#) all abortions
- Paying a private investigator \$50,000 to [dig up dirt](#) on the cave diver he called "pedo guy"

That's a disturbing list for a random person *not* taking over a company that plays a role in millions of people's lives, and exponentially more so for one who is.

Musk has said that Twitter should [avoid getting involved](#) in content regulation, and given his documented history of spreading misinformation, attacking his perceived enemies, and retaliating against individuals who he thinks have wronged him, it's not hard to see why. Which is more than a little worrisome to people who already think Twitter has a problem with misinformation and abuse ([particularly towards women](#)). Musk claims he needs to rescue Twitter from its current owners, who he thinks do not respect the First Amendment. But, as many have [pointed out](#), "no one has a legal right to tweet—that is, to post on Twitter, a platform owned by a private company," and the First Amendment, for zillionaires who are unaware, is about protection from government entities restricting what people are allowed to say, not privately held social media networks. That's how, for example, Musk can get away with allegedly firing Tesla employees who disagree with him. Whereas with Twitter, he apparently wants to manipulate the idea of what "free speech" means, and has suggested he'll allow people to say whatever they want without consequence, even if what they want to say constitutes harassment or threats or the kind of misinformation that poses a genuine risk to people's lives. Which, as the above list suggests, is very much his thing.

Is the world's richest person the world's worst boss? What it's like working for Elon Musk



(Jim Cooke / Los Angeles Times; photo: Patrick Pleul/Pool photo)

Elon Musk’s track record as a boss is an endless scroll of impulse firings, retribution, tone-deafness on race — and the impregnation of a subordinate.

By [Russ Mitchell](#)

In the last two weeks, thousands of Twitter employees have gotten a small taste of what it’s like to work for Elon Musk: the out-of-nowhere firings, the threats and the bluster, the pubescent jocularity, the day-to-day uncertainty and the urgent demands to work through the night.

If there’s such a thing as a warm and cuddly boss, Musk has long been the opposite to his employees, who now number more than 100,000. He burns through executives with the heat of a battery fire. He takes criticism personally, even when it’s a matter of worker or customer safety. He’s been known to fire people on a whim. Since buying Twitter, his public image is shifting fast, from self-described techno-king to unpredictable court jester and human tornado.

Because Musk makes new employees sign tough nondisclosure agreements, and because he’s developed a reputation for exacting retribution on those who cross him, we’ll never know all the stories.

But there’s plenty in the public record. Personal attacks. Union busting. A casual attitude toward factory floor injuries and other health concerns. A dismissive approach to workplace racism. And an allegation involving a horse and sexual favors.



[Business](#)

[Elon Musk attempts 'hardcore' culture reset at Twitter. Will employees buy in?](#)

Anger management

Musk’s short fuse is legend. If something’s wrong and it’s important to Musk, employees have learned to avoid his presence if possible.

Back in 2017 Musk was looking for someone to blame after his plans for cutting-edge automation at Tesla’s Nevada battery factory began chewing up factory productivity.

According to Wired writer Charles DuHigg, in a story called [“Dr. Elon & Mr. Musk,”](#) the CEO was apoplectic, trying to figure out what was wrong and who was to blame when he summoned a young engineer over to assist him.

“Hey, buddy, this doesn’t work!” he shouted at the engineer, another employee told DuHigg. “Did you do this?”

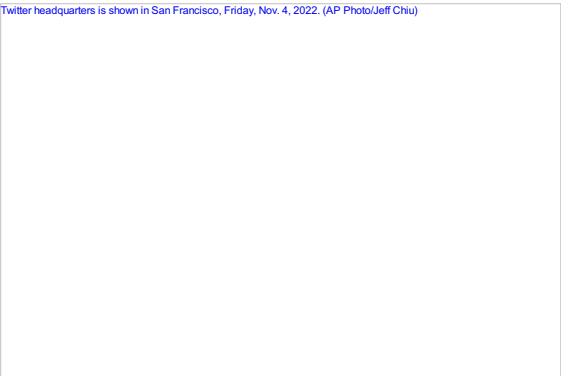
“You mean, program the robot?” the engineer said. “Or design that tool?”

“Did you f— do this?” Musk asked him.

“I’m not sure what you’re referring to?” the engineer replied apologetically.

“You’re a f— idiot!” Musk shouted back. “Get the f— out and don’t come back!”

[Twitter headquarters is shown in San Francisco, Friday, Nov. 4, 2022. \(AP Photo/Jeff Chiu\)](#)



[Technology and the Internet](#)

[Thinking of quitting Twitter? Here's everything you should know](#)

Tim Higgins’ 2021 Tesla book, “Power Play,” offers several different looks at how Musk vents his anger. “Musk’s fury caused several executives to leave the company. Higgins wrote, including Peter Rawlinson, the executive leading the development of the Model S, who left Tesla to found the electric-car company Lucid Motors.

When asked about his temper, Musk has said he doesn’t do rage firings, but provides “clear and frank” feedback.

Toxic avenger

A pattern: If Musk perceives he's been crossed, he does more than seethe — he seeks retribution.

Musk's quickness to lash out when wounded was on display in the [defamation trial](#) that resulted after a British diver suggested that a mini-submarine developed by Musk to rescue youth soccer players trapped in a cave wouldn't work and Musk responded by calling the diver a pedophile. (Musk won the trial.)

More than once, he's displayed the same spirit of retaliation toward employees who raised issues at one of his companies.

After Model S engineer Cristina Balan emailed Musk about what she saw as serious safety issues in product design, she was escorted to what she thought would be a face-to-face with him. Instead, she was led into a security room and fired.

For years Balan has been trying to sue Tesla for defamation. But Tesla lawyers have been able to keep Balan's evidence from being presented to a judge.

[Business](#)

[Tesla called her a criminal. Her fight could be a milestone for employees' rights](#)

Another whistleblower, Martin Tripp, moved to Hungary to escape the wrath of Musk after the news site Insider ran a story about excessive scrap waste at Tesla's battery factory in 2018. Private investigators hired by Musk to identify the source named Tripp, a factory employee.

Tripp was fired. Tesla said he stole company data. Musk later called a reporter to say he'd heard Tripp was on his way to the factory with a gun. The local sheriff's department later said, no, he was miles away in Reno, with no gun and no evidence he had one.

Accidents happen

Twitter employees don't work with dangerous, heavy machinery, like factory workers do. Good thing, based on numerous reports about the safety culture at Tesla over the years.

In May 2017, The Times detailed the [safety record at Tesla's Fremont, Calif., factory](#). Tesla's injury incident rate topped that of some industries commonly associated with especially dangerous work, including sawmills and slaughterhouses. Tesla did not dispute the numbers but said that it was "learning how to be a car company" and that "what matters is the future."

The injury rate did improve. But in 2018, the public radio investigative reporting program "Reveal" alleged that Tesla was leaving injuries off the books.

One way Tesla lowered its injury numbers, according to "Reveal," was by denying ambulance service to some injured factory workers who requested it. Medical staff were told not to call 911 without management permission.

"The electric car maker's contract doctors rarely grant it, instead often insisting that seriously injured workers — including one who severed the top of a finger — be sent to the emergency room in a Lyft," "Reveal" said, quoting five former medical clinic employees at Tesla's Fremont auto assembly plant.

Lockdown showdown

With COVID-19 ripping through the nation in March 2020, and counties across California ordering "shelter in place" lockdowns, Musk defied the orders and [kept the plant open](#).

Under official pressure, Musk temporarily closed the plant. In May he announced the plant would reopen. Employees could stay home, he said, but wouldn't be paid.

[Scenes at the Tesla car factory include workers organizing parts for assembly.](#)

[Business](#)

[Stay home if you want, Musk tells Tesla workers as Fremont plant stays open](#)

County public health head Erica Pan and other officials told him it wasn't safe. The factory would reopen, he said. If officials didn't like it, they could arrest him. He called Pan "unelected & ignorant" and deemed stay-at-home orders "fascist." He threatened to move Tesla headquarters from California to Texas. And, in 2021, he did.

Health officials said at least several hundred Tesla factory workers were [infected](#) by COVID.

Union, jacked

Tesla's factories are union free, but when workers in Fremont tried to organize, Musk cracked down hard. Tesla later was cited by the National Labor Relations Board for [repeatedly violating](#) U.S. labor law, including the firing of a union leader and forcing workers to remove clothing with messages that supported the union. The company was also ordered to remove a Musk tweet threatening the disappearance of employee stock options should a union vote prevail.

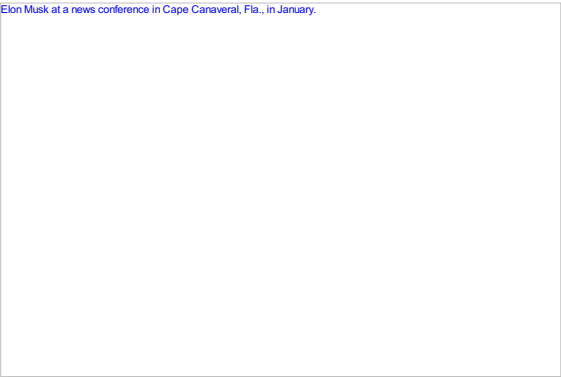
Boundary issues - Musk fucks his own staff

Most companies discourage executives from fraternizing with staff too intimately because of the messy conflicts it can create. That did not stop Musk from secretly having twins with a top executive at his brain implant company Neuralink, according to [an Insider report](#).

Shivon Zilis, the 36-year-old executive, told Neuralink managers that the twins were born through in vitro fertilization, according to Reuters, and that she didn't have a romantic relationship with her 51-year-old billionaire boss. Musk has said underpopulation is one of the biggest threats to civilization.

Zilis has continued working as Neuralink's director of operations and special projects.

Elon Musk at a news conference in Cape Canaveral, Fla., in January.



Business

If Elon Musk's Twitter plan goes poof, it wouldn't be the first time

In another strange episode, Musk found himself tethered in what's become known as the [horse-for-sex](#) scandal.

Business Insider also [broke that story](#), which revolved around a lawsuit filed by a woman who said she was hired to provide massage services to the world's richest human.

She alleged she was summoned by Musk aboard his Gulfstream G650ER private jet for a "full body massage" and Musk showed her his erect penis, then "touched her" and "offered to buy her a horse" in return for sex. SpaceX paid the woman \$250,000 in a legal settlement.

Hear no evil

Musk's alleged crossing of personal lines with employees points to a broader issue: a seeming indifference or persistent blindness to issues around race and sex in the workplace.

Former SpaceX engineer Ashley Kosak published an [essay](#) online in 2021 that described a culture in which sexism ran rampant and the company did nothing to stop it. She described "countless men" making sexual advances. After one male co-worker "ran his hand over my shirt, from my lower waist to my chest," she reported the incident but said no one followed up and the man remained on her team.

Soon after, the Verge talked to several former employees who [backed up](#) the gist of Kosak's account and said they suffered similar harassment and retaliation for reporting it.

SpaceX did not respond to the Verge's allegations. The publication did obtain an email written by SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell that said the company takes sexual harassment seriously, and that "we also know we can always do better."

After the report of his alleged horse offer, SpaceX employees wrote an [open letter](#) criticizing Musk's behavior and the distraction he created. Some of the employees behind the letter were fired, according to a message from Shotwell obtained by the New York Times. In her letter, Shotwell said people who were asked to sign the letter were made to feel "uncomfortable, intimidated, and bullied."

At Tesla, Black workers have for years made well-documented complaints about racism on the factory floor. Earlier this year, California's civil rights agency [filed suit against the company](#) on behalf of thousands of workers.

[Black workers](#) complained that managers called them monkeys and other racial slurs, including routine use of the N-word. Some alleged the Black workers were given the worst jobs, no matter their qualifications. When they complained to human resources, several said, it made matters worse, and some were fired.

Tesla disputed the workers' accounts at the time, saying, "Tesla prohibits discrimination in any form."

Musk was not implicated directly in any of the complaints. Nor did he show any sign of taking them more seriously than he has taken past allegations of bias in his company's workplaces or criticisms of his own department. His response: an email to workers advising victims of racism to get a "thick skin."

