



Riverside County District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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LOWE'S STORES ORDERED TO PAY \$18.1 MILLION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATIONS

RIVERSIDE – A judge has ordered North Carolina-based Lowe's Home Centers, LLC, to pay \$18.1 million as part of a settlement in a civil environmental prosecution.

The announcement of the settlement comes from Riverside County District Attorney Paul Zellerbach and 31 other county district attorneys and two city attorneys from across California. The settlement was signed on April 1, 2014, by Alameda County Superior Court Judge George C. Hernandez Jr.

The civil enforcement action filed in Alameda County alleges that more than 118 Lowe's stores throughout the state unlawfully handled and disposed of various hazardous wastes and materials over a 6 ½-year period. Those hazardous wastes and materials included pesticides, aerosols, paint and colorant solvents, adhesives, batteries, fluorescent bulbs containing mercury, electronic products and other toxic, ignitable, and/or corrosive materials.

"All businesses in Riverside County need to understand the importance of and their responsibility in the legal and safe handling and disposal of hazardous waste material," DA Zellerbach said. "This office will continue to take part in actions like this one to make sure such important safety regulations are followed by all businesses for the safety of our residents."

Lowe's was cooperative throughout the investigation and has adopted enhanced policies and procedures designed to eliminate the disposal of hazardous waste products in California. Stores are required to retain their hazardous waste in segregated, labeled containers so as to minimize the risk of exposure to employees and customers and to ensure that incompatible wastes do not combine to cause dangerous chemical reactions. Hazardous waste produced by California Lowe's stores through damage, spills and returns is being collected by state-registered haulers, taken to proper disposal facilities and properly accounted for and documented.

From 2011 to 2013, inspectors from the Alameda County District Attorney's Office Environmental Protection Division and investigators from the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, along with other district attorney investigators and environmental regulators statewide, conducted a series of waste inspections of dumpsters belonging to Lowe's stores. The inspections revealed that Lowe's was routinely and systematically sending hazardous wastes to local landfills throughout California that were not permitted to receive those wastes. The inspections also revealed that at some Lowe's stores, instead of recycling batteries and compact fluorescent light bulbs that the company had gathered from customers at store recycling kiosks as part of a program to responsibly reduce waste, employees were unlawfully discarding these items directly to the trash.

Under the final judgment, Lowe's must pay \$12.85 million in civil penalties and costs. An additional \$2.075 million will fund supplemental environmental projects furthering consumer protection and environmental enforcement in California, and Lowe's will fund hazardous waste minimization projects of \$3.175 million. The retailer will be bound under the terms of a permanent injunction prohibiting similar future violations of law.

There are 10 Lowe's stores and one distribution center in Riverside County. Under the settlement, various Riverside County agencies – including the DA's Office -- will receive \$650,375.