



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



MICHAEL L. RAMSEY
District Attorney

FRANCISCO R. ZARATE
Chief Deputy District Attorney

KORY L. HONEA
Chief Investigator

PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until 2 p.m.
March 3, 2011

Target Corporation to Pay \$22.5 Million Settlement for Environmental Violations *Company Illegally Dumped Pesticides and Hazardous Chemicals*

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey, together with 20 other California District Attorneys, the state Attorney General and the City Attorneys in San Diego and Los Angeles announced today that a judge in Oakland has ordered the Minnesota-based Target Corporation to pay \$22.5 million as part of a settlement of a civil environmental prosecution.

The judgment is the culmination of a civil enforcement lawsuit filed in Alameda County two years ago claiming that more than 290 Target stores and distribution centers throughout the state handled and disposed of various hazardous wastes and materials improperly. The investigation began in 2005. Alleged violations included improper storage, transportation and disposal of bleach, paint, pesticides, batteries, light bulbs and other hazardous materials. Prosecutors accused the retail giant of cutting corners for the bottom line -- chemicals returned by customers or found to be defective were poured down the drain, tossed into dumpsters and trucked to landfills not equipped for hazardous waste.

Stores also kept incompatible and combustible liquids, like ammonia and bleach, side-by-side on shelves and poured them into dumpsters mixed together, creating fire and other safety hazards, prosecutors said. The Target store in Chico was one of those involved in the hazardous waste investigation, Ramsey said. The local Environmental Health division of the Butte County Public Health Department contributed to the local investigation, he said.

“This settlement is only the first step in Target’s obligation to clean up its act. A permanent injunction, signed by the Alameda County Superior Court yesterday, will hold Target accountable for any failures to follow their obligations under environmental waste disposal laws, even after the civil penalties and costs are paid,” said Ramsey. “Thanks to the hard work of our Environmental Unit and fellow prosecutors across California, Target stores are no longer routinely and systematically dumping hazardous waste into the environment.”

Under the settlement, which includes a final judgment and the permanent injunction against Target, the corporation must pay \$22.5 million for civil penalties and costs, and to fund several supplemental environmental projects.

As a result of the prosecution, many California Target stores have already adopted new policies

Press

March 3, 2011

Page 2 of 2

and procedures designed to eliminate the disposal of hazardous waste into store trash compactors and down drains. Stores are now required to maintain their hazardous waste in segregated, labeled containers so as to minimize the risk of exposure to employees and customers and ensure that incompatible wastes (such as ammonia and chlorine) do not combine to cause dangerous chemical reactions. Additionally, Target has agreed to implement a statewide program to enforce proper compliance of waste disposal laws, train employees in legal ways to handle hazardous sludge and pay an independent auditor to check compliance for three years.

Hazardous waste generated by California Target stores through damaged products, spills and customer returns must be collected by state-registered haulers, taken to proper disposal facilities and properly documented and accounted for. Target stores have begun to produce shipments of hazardous waste every 30 days, whereas before the investigation those same hazardous wastes were largely unaccounted for and, according to employees, were routinely illegally disposed into the local landfills.