



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

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Charges Brought in Chico Neighborhood Asbestos Dumping Case

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced today his office has brought criminal charges against a Chico businessman for the unlawful dumping of asbestos in a residential north Chico neighborhood.

Ramsey said in February of this year the California Department of Fish and Wildlife was contacted by a concerned citizen in north Chico about a man who was seen dumping large quantities of suspicious waste on his property. The man was identified as Richard E. Parks, 70, of Chico. Parks is the owner of several buildings in the North Valley Plaza.

A Fish and Wildlife warden responded on the morning of February 29, 2020 and contacted Parks as Parks was in the process of dumping the contents of a dump truck into a hole on Parks' residential property in the 3400 block of Keefer Road. In the hole, the warden immediately noticed a number of large bags labeled "Asbestos." The warden quarantined the scene and contacted the Butte County District Attorney's Office, who sent a special environmental crimes investigator to assist. An environmental scientist was also called out to test the substance, and it was confirmed the bags contained asbestos, a known toxic and carcinogenic substance. Parks' property was immediately treated as a crime scene, and was locked down by law enforcement.

The following day a search warrant was executed at Parks' residence by investigators from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Department of Toxic Substance Control out of Sacramento, and the District Attorney's Office. Additional samples of the waste were taken, and steps were taken to prevent the asbestos from becoming airborne by covering the exposed bags.

Ramsey said during the investigation it was learned that Parks had removed the asbestos from properties he owned at the North Valley Plaza, and had transported it to his residential property. Parks did not possess any of the proper permits or authorization needed to transport the asbestos, and was dumping the asbestos in a way that could cause it to become airborne and expose other nearby residents to it. The location where Parks dumped the asbestos is also a drainage into Rock Creek. Ramsey said investigators also discovered another location where Parks had dumped asbestos several years ago on his same property.

Ramsey said the District Attorney's Office has charged Parks with criminal counts of Unlawfully Transporting Hazardous Material and Dumping Hazardous Material, both felonies, as well as a misdemeanor count of Endangering a Waterway of the State, to wit, Rock Creek. Ramsey said

Parks faces up to four years in jail, plus significant environment fines of \$5,000 to \$100,000 per day that the asbestos was in the ground. Ramsey noted Parks is cooperative and working with an environmental remediation company and the Department of Toxic Substance Control to safely remove the asbestos from his property.

Parks will appear in Butte County Superior Court on September 3, 2020 to be arraigned on the charges.