

[Press release: Packaging and print firm fined for turning river purple with hazardous waste](#)

The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

On 20 April 2017 the Environment Agency received reports that the River Yeo had turned purple downstream of the Pen Mill Trading Estate, Yeovil. Concerned members of the public reported discolouration up to 4 kilometres downstream of the industrial estate.

Environment Agency staff traced the source of the pollution to Ablebox Ltd, a local company manufacturing cardboard boxes and operating its own printing works at a premises in Buckland Road, Yeovil.

The next day officers returned to the premises and saw waste ink being hosed into a drain. They also found inappropriately stored containers of waste ink and spill kits already full of soiled absorbents. Dye testing confirmed the waste ink had flowed through the site's surface water system and directly into the River Yeo via a surface water outfall.

An employee was later found to have poured up to 50 buckets of waste ink down a drain over a 2 to 3 day period. He stated he'd done so on the instruction of management because there was no room left in the waste ink storage containers. Ablebox Ltd claimed the employee had taken it upon himself to dispose of the ink without the company's knowledge.

Magistrates heard that Wessex Water had previously detected unauthorised discharges in the sewerage system and that Ablebox Ltd had been told they were improperly disposing of waste ink through the drain and sewers on at least two occasions. The company blamed the illegal discharges on one of their employees.

Oliver Hill, for the Environment Agency, said:

Businesses must never pour any waste down surface water drains as they are often connected to nearby streams or rivers. By disposing of waste in this way you are committing a criminal offence. This prosecution serves as a timely reminder for businesses to act responsibly. Where we have evidence, we won't hesitate to prosecute offenders.

Appearing before Yeovil magistrates, the company was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £1,281 legal costs after pleading guilty to causing or knowingly permitting a discharge of noxious or polluting matter into a controlled watercourse contrary to section 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting Regulations.

The company was also ordered to pay investigation costs of £5,566 and a victim surcharge of £170. The case was heard on 7 November 2018.