

Unlicensed collector and person-in-charge of open recycling site convicted of illegally handling chemical waste (with photos)

An unlicensed collector and a person-in-charge of an open recycling site were convicted and fined a total of \$18,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (August 17) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) and the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation respectively by illegally handling chemical waste.

In January, a waste collector caused a fire when disposing of waste at the North East New Territories (NENT) Landfill, resulting in the landfill temporarily suspending its operation. After investigation, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) found that the waste collector involved had allegedly made an illegal disposal of a large batch of waste lithium batteries, which is classified as chemical waste, without a Chemical Waste Collection Licence. Enforcement officers of the EPD immediately traced the source of the aforementioned waste.

On the same day, the enforcement officers found that a batch of waste lithium batteries was illegally stored at an open recycling site in Ping Che, Fanling. After gathering evidence, the EPD prosecuted the unlicensed waste collector and the person-in-charge of the recycling site involved under the WDO and the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation respectively. In addition, the EPD requested the person-in-charge to hire a licensed chemical waste collector to transport waste batteries to licensed disposal facilities for treatment instead of sending them to landfills for disposal.

A spokesperson for the EPD said that disposing of chemical waste at the NENT Landfill is strictly prohibited. The illegal transport or disposal of improperly treated waste lithium batteries may cause fires or explosions and therefore pose dangers to landfill personnel or road users. Chemical waste must be transported in compliant vehicles by licensed collectors to suitable disposal facilities for treatment. Otherwise, it constitutes an offence. The spokesman reminded refuse collection vehicle drivers that they must ensure waste being transported to landfills for disposal is compliant with the law. Otherwise, they may be held liable upon conviction in court. The EPD will continue to rigorously combat the illegal collection or disposal of chemical waste to protect the environment.

Anyone engaged in the illegal collection, storage and disposal of chemical waste will be prosecuted. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.

Members of the public may visit the EPD's website for more information

about the control of chemical waste:

www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/waste/guide_ref/guide_cwc.html.

