

Unlicensed collector convicted of illegally disposing of chemical waste (with photos)

Confidential Materials Destruction Service Limited was convicted and fined \$110,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (December 1) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) and the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation by collecting chemical waste without a licence and illegally disposing of it.

In April this year, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) discovered that waste discarded by a waste collection vehicle at the North East New Territories (NENT) Landfill caused sparks and minor explosions, which required immediate suspension of the landfill's operation and service from the Fire Services Department. The waste collection vehicle concerned was immediately intercepted as it was about to depart from the landfill. The incident did not cause any casualties.

After investigation, staff of the EPD found that waste compressed gas cylinders containing flammable organic compounds, including butane and ethanol, were illegally discarded at the landfill from the vehicle. These cylinders with such compounds are classified as "Part A" chemical waste. It was confirmed that the company owning the vehicle had failed to obtain a Chemical Waste Collection Licence and to dispose of "Part A" chemical waste with prior notice to the EPD in accordance with the law. The EPD instituted a prosecution against the company involved under the WDO and the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation.

A spokesperson for the EPD said chemical waste must be transported in compliant vehicles by licensed collectors to suitable facilities for disposal. Otherwise, accidents, for instance a fire, may take place and pose dangers to personnel or road users.

In order to allow the relevant disposal facilities to make proper arrangements, waste producers must give the EPD prior notification in accordance with the law if they wish to dispose of "Part A" chemical waste.

Disposing of waste compressed gas cylinders containing flammable chemical waste at landfills is prohibited. They should be transported by licensed collectors to the licensed Chemical Waste Treatment Centre in Tsing Yi for disposal.

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.

