

Unlicensed waste batteries collector and two garage owners convicted for contravening Waste Disposal Ordinance

The owner of a vehicle repair workshop, Wah Kee Motor Car Service Co. in Shek Mun, Sha Tin, was convicted at Fanling Magistrates' Court today (April 18) for failing to comply with Environmental Protection Department (EPD) officers' instructions under the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) to provide relevant documents during officers' investigation of the illegal collection of waste vehicle batteries. In the same case, an unlicensed collector and the owner of another vehicle repair workshop, Man Shing Motors Car Service Co., who were involved in illegal collection and handling of waste vehicle batteries, had been convicted for contravening the WDO and the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation earlier on February 19. The three persons were fined a total of \$38,000.

The EPD conducted an enforcement operation in July last year, and found that an unlicensed collector illegally collected waste lead acid batteries (WLABs), which are classified as chemical waste, from a vehicle repair workshop in Shek Mun. During the operation, the EPD officers found that the two workshops, Man Shing and Wah Kee, were providing vehicle repair services at the above location. After gathering evidence, the officers found that Man Shing had illegally passed the WLABs to the unlicensed collector concerned, while the owner of Wah Kee failed to comply with the EPD officers' instruction to provide relevant documents for investigation and caused obstruction to the officers in the performance of their duties. The EPD subsequently initiated prosecutions against the three persons concerned in accordance with the WDO and the Regulation.

A spokesperson for the EPD said, "WLABs contain sulphuric acid, lead and lead compound, which are corrosive, toxic and classified as chemical waste. Improper handling or disposal will pollute the environment and pose risks to public health."

The spokesperson reminded all workshop operators and workers engaged in the vehicle repair business that EPD officers, during enforcement, can require the persons involved to provide relevant documents or to offer assistance, in accordance with the WDO. Anyone who fails to comply with any requirement without reasonable excuse commits an offence, and is liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000. In addition, the trade should register as chemical waste producers with the EPD in accordance with the above Regulation. Chemical waste must be properly packaged, labelled and stored, and has to be collected by licensed chemical waste collectors for delivery to licensed chemical waste disposal facilities for treatment. Moreover, for replacement of lubricating oil or batteries, vehicle owners should engage the services of vehicle repair garages or companies that have registered with the EPD. 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.