

Waste collector and data systems engineering company convicted for illegal handling of chemical waste

A waste collector (Sheung Yip Electrical Metal) and a data systems engineering company (Enviro-Tech Engineering Company Limited) illegally produced, collected and stored waste lead-acid batteries (WLABs) and waste mineral oil. They were fined a total of \$25,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (December 4) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) and the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation.

During an enforcement operation in May this year, staff of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) found that the waste collector concerned collected WLABs from a data centre located at North Point Industrial Building, and transported the WLABs to an open recycling site in Yuen Long. About 400 (20 tonnes) WLABs and 30 drums (6 tonnes) of waste mineral oil were found being stored at the recycling site. After investigation and evidence gathering, the EPD confirmed that the waste collector illegally collected and stored WLABs and waste mineral oil at the open recycling site and resold them for a profit. The data systems engineering company concerned did not register the location for producing chemical waste (the data centre at North Point Industrial Building) as a chemical waste producer in accordance with the statutory requirement. The EPD subsequently prosecuted the waste collector and the data systems engineering company under the WDO and the Regulation.

The EPD spokesman said that WLABs (containing sulphuric acid and lead) and waste mineral oil are classified as chemical waste and relevant parties should register with the EPD as chemical waste producers in accordance with the 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.

The spokesman said, "The EPD has recently sent letters to practitioners in the installation and maintenance of information systems, data centres and telecommunication industry to remind members of the trade that they should register as chemical waste producers for locations where WLABs are generated (such as locations with a data centre or a computer server system). Licensed chemical waste collectors should also be hired to deliver the waste to licensed chemical waste disposal facilities for treatment."

Anyone who engages 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. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and two years' 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.