



HUMBOLDT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Re: *Local businessman fined \$100,000 for dumping contaminants*

Date: November 18, 2011

Contact: District Attorney Paul Gallegos

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Richard Miller, former owner of Redwood Motorsports in Eureka, has been ordered to pay \$100,000 to settle a 2006 lawsuit related to illegally dumping pollutants into storm drains. Under the terms of the agreement, Miller will also reimburse more than \$28,000 in agency costs and remove an illegally abandoned underground storage tank.

The civil action against him was initiated in 2003 by the Department of Health and Human Services Division of Environmental Health (DEH). DEH Director Melissa Martel led the investigation. The Humboldt County District Attorney's Office filed charges against Miller and the terms of the settlement were finalized this year.

Following the initial investigation, 17 violations were filed, including failure to provide personnel training, failure to provide required paperwork, and illegal disposal of hazardous waste. According to Martel, the dumping of hazardous substances continued and 16 additional violations were cited.

An unrelated 2005 investigation revealed that hazardous waste from Miller's Eureka business was being illegally transported and stored in Carlotta. Large drums filled with pollutants had deteriorated and some were leaking waste oil, solvent and gasoline into the soil.

In addition to the payment of fees and fines, Miller was required to clean up both properties. Deputy District Attorney Christa McKimmy, who prosecuted the civil case against Miller, said she hopes these costs will cause polluters to think twice about illegal dumping. "This case illustrates that it really doesn't pay to disregard the rules," McKimmy said. "We hope that businesses recognize this and act responsibly to protect our environment."

District Attorney Paul Gallegos said, "Sadly, toxins and pollutants dumped into our sensitive waterways and ecosystems don't simply disappear. They linger in our environment and do untold damage for years to come. The sooner we can catch and stop perpetrators like Miller, the more effective we can be in limiting that harm."

Since the judgment against him was entered earlier this year, Miller has paid \$28,000 in cost recovery to DEH and more than \$13,000 of the \$100,000 penalty.

Martel noted that fines such as these are levied against polluters only after other efforts to obtain compliance have been exhausted. "While local agencies work hard to educate the public about community about hazardous materials laws and regulations, sometimes fines and penalties are warranted," she said. "We do our best to keep Humboldt healthy."