

Two unlicensed collectors convicted of illegally handling chemical waste (with photo)

Two unlicensed collectors were convicted and fined a total of \$26,500 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (July 14) and July 7 for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) and the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation as a result of illegally collecting and handling spent lubricating oil and waste lead-acid batteries.

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has been endeavouring to combat illegal collection and handling of chemical waste generated from vehicle repairs in workshops. Last year, enforcement officers of the EPD carried out a series of operations according to intelligence received and successfully intercepted unlicensed collectors allegedly collecting spent lubricating oil and waste lead-acid batteries from vehicle repair workshops illegally. One of the unlicensed chemical waste collectors, namely KWK Trading Limited, delivered spent lubricating oil to their open-air storage site in the New Territories. There were no warning sign and chemical waste spill facilities at the site. The spent lubricating oil seized there was over 20 000 litres.

In addition, enforcement officers of the EPD intercepted a suspected vehicle and seized a number of waste lead-acid batteries without proper packaging and labelling. It was confirmed that the driver involved was collecting chemical waste without a licence.

After collecting evidence, the EPD prosecuted the company and driver involved under the WDO and the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation.

An EPD spokesman stressed that spent lubricating oil and waste lead-acid batteries generated from vehicle repairs in workshops, which are classified as chemical waste, contain various corrosive and toxic chemicals. If not handled properly, they would pollute the environment and cause harm to public health.

The spokesman reminded members of the vehicle repair business that they must register as chemical waste producers with the EPD in accordance with the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) 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, the spokesman urged that, for replacement of lubricating oil or lead-acid batteries, vehicle owners should engage the services of vehicle repair workshops or companies that have been 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.

