Pep Boys to Pay $3.7 Million for Violating Environmental Protection Laws

Hazardous Waste Illegally Thrown in Dumpsters

For more than three years, Pep Boys automotive stores in San Diego and across the state were routinely and illegally throwing automotive fluids, batteries, aerosol cans, electronic devices and other regulated hazardous waste in dumpsters destined for municipal landfills not authorized to accept hazardous waste, an undercover investigation found. During the same period – from April 2014 through November 2017 – Pep Boys also failed to shred customer records, which contained confidential information, before throwing the documents in the trash.

As a result of the investigation, The Pep Boys Manny Moe & Jack of California (Pep Boys) will pay $3.7 million to resolve allegations that the company violated state laws governing hazardous waste and hazardous materials. The investigation was led by the Environmental Protection Unit of the San Diego DA’s Office, along with investigators from other district attorney offices, and environmental regulators statewide.

“This settlement holds Pep Boys accountable for violating laws that are in place to protect the environment and the privacy of consumers,” DA Summer Stephan said. “These types of investigations and settlements are a reminder to corporations that they have a responsibility to be a good steward to our environment or face consequences.”

Today’s announcement is in conjunction with multiple district attorney offices across the state including Alameda, Kern, Orange, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Ventura and Yolo Counties.

Pep Boys is an automotive service retailer and distributor of automotive replacement parts, accessories, and engine additives in North America. In California it owns or operates approximately 151 retail facilities and a distribution center. There are 14 Pep Boys facilities in San Diego County.

During the investigation, investigators and environmental regulators conducted a series of undercover inspections of waste bins originating at 19 separate Pep Boys facilities. These inspections found
numerous instances of unlawful disposal of hazardous waste and violations of laws protecting confidential consumer information.

When Pep Boys officials were notified by the prosecutors of the unlawful disposals, they fully cooperated and quickly responded by enhancing company policies and procedures to eliminate improper disposal of hazardous waste products in California and to protect confidential customer information. Stores are required to properly manage hazardous waste and to retain their waste in segregated, labeled containers to minimize the risk of exposure to employees and customers and to ensure that incompatible waste does not combine to cause dangerous chemical reactions. Hazardous waste produced by California Pep Boys stores through damage, spills and returns is being collected by state-registered haulers, taken to proper disposal facilities and properly documented and accounted for.

The settlement requires a monetary payment of $3.7 million, which consists of $1.82 million for civil penalties, $260,000 for supplemental environmental projects and $425,000 to reimburse investigative and enforcement costs. Of the total, the San Diego DA’s Office will receive $168,000 and San Diego County Department of Environmental Health will receive $21,000. Pep Boys gets a credit of $1.2 million against the penalties if it undertakes at least $2.4 million in environmental enhancement work not required by law. In addition, the settlement includes provisions requiring Pep Boys to undergo a trash receptacle audit to ensure hazardous waste and confidential consumer information is properly disposed of at all facilities. The company must also comply with 23 injunctive requirements to comply with environmental protection and confidential consumer information protection laws.

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**About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office**

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.