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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Date: February 14, 2024

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Attorney General Bonta, District Attorneys Including OCDA Announce Nearly \$5 Million Settlement with Quest Diagnostics for Illegal Disposal of Hazardous Waste, Medical Waste and Protected Patient Information

Oakland Calif. -- California Attorney General Rob Bonta today announced a settlement with Quest Diagnostics, Inc., resolving allegations that the diagnostic laboratory company unlawfully disposed of hazardous waste, medical waste, and protected health information at its facilities statewide. As part of the settlement, Quest Diagnostics will be required to pay nearly \$5 million for penalties, costs, and supplemental environmental projects and make significant changes to its operations and practices at its California facilities. Attorney General Bonta is joined by the district attorneys of Alameda, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Ventura, and Yolo Counties in today's settlement.

"Quest Diagnostics' illegal disposal of hazardous and medical waste and patient information put families and communities at risk and endangered our environment," said Attorney General Rob Bonta. "Let today's settlement send a clear message that my office will hold corporations, including medical services providers, accountable for violations of state environmental and privacy laws. I appreciate the partnership of the district attorneys' offices across our state that led to this critical settlement."

"This settlement demonstrates the commitment of my Consumer Justice Bureau to protect the residents of Alameda County against identity theft and ensure that such violations do not occur again," said Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price. "Our continued ability to collaborate with the Attorney General and other District Attorney's offices to protect public safety for all California residents is a testament to our team and the progress under my administration."

"This settlement will help ensure that patients' personally identifiable and private health information is protected and will protect worker safety and human health by ensuring that hazardous and medical wastes are properly managed and disposed of," said Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine Pacioni.

"We will not allow the public's health to be jeopardized by laboratories who prioritized cutting corners over protecting the health of the very people they were supposed to be caring for," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "This was not an isolated incident by a single Quest Diagnostics testing facility; this was Quest Diagnostics laboratories and testing facilities across the state skirting California's hazardous waste laws while ignoring the very real environmental and health impacts of these illegal actions. I want to thank Attorney General Rob Bonta and the San Joaquin District Attorney's Office for their leadership in this collaborative effort to hold companies accountable for violating our environmental laws and endangering the safety of Californians."

"This settlement is the result of a successful collaboration between District Attorney's Offices and the state Attorney General's Office to protect California's environment and its health consumers," said Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho. "Thanks to the joint efforts of our Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit and prosecutors across the state, the financial penalty and permanent injunction will deter Quest Diagnostics from violating hazardous waste, medical waste and protected health information laws. Sacramento County will receive a total of \$259,440 from the settlement, which will reimburse the cost of prosecuting this case and increase the enforcement of consumer and environmental protection laws."

"We take very seriously violations regarding medical waste, hazardous waste, and patient confidentiality," said San Bernardino County District Attorney Jason Anderson. "We are thankful for the cooperation of Quest, and the diligent work of our Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit in securing this settlement. With judgments like these, we can ensure proper disposal of medical and hazardous waste which protects the public and the environment, while safeguarding the privacy of San Bernardino County residents."

"Through our meticulous waste audits, it came to light that Quest Diagnostics may have encountered challenges in properly managing confidential patient data, medical waste, and hazardous materials. Our initial inquiry in San Joaquin County prompted us to engage with the Attorney General's office and other relevant parties," said San Joaquin County District Attorney Ron Freitas. "Subsequent audits conducted at Quest's laboratories shed further light on potential mismanagement issues. This underscores the significance of maintaining robust waste management practices in healthcare to uphold patient confidentiality and ensure public safety."

"The Simi Valley Landfill & Recycling Center and Ventura County residents were negatively impacted by Quest's illegal disposal of hazardous waste, medical waste, and protected patient information," said Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko. "Thanks to the hard work of the California Attorney General's office, the District Attorney's offices and our partner agencies, this settlement will ensure that Quest complies with the law and implements strong measures to protect the health, safety, and privacy of our residents."

The settlement is the result of over 30 inspections conducted by the district attorneys' offices at Quest Diagnostics laboratories and Patient Service Centers (PSCs) statewide. During those inspections, the district attorneys' offices reviewed the contents of Quest Diagnostics' compactors and dumpsters and found hundreds of containers of chemicals, as well as bleach, reagents, batteries, and electronic waste; unredacted medical information; medical waste such as used specimen containers for blood and urine; and hazardous waste such as used batteries, solvents, and flammable liquids. The unlawful disposals are alleged to violate the Hazardous Waste Control Law, Medical Waste Management Act, Unfair Competition Law, and civil laws prohibiting the unauthorized disclosure of personal health information.

After being notified of the investigations, Quest Diagnostics implemented numerous changes to bring its facilities into compliance with California law, including hiring an independent environmental auditor to review the disposal of waste at its facilities and modifying its operating and training procedures to improve its handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste, medical waste, and personal health information at all four laboratories and over 600 PSCs in California.

The settlement resolves the allegations above and requires Quest Diagnostics to pay \$3,999,500 in civil penalties, \$700,000 in costs, and \$300,000 for a Supplemental Environmental Project to support environmental training and enforcement in California. The settlement also imposes injunctive terms, including requirements that Quest Diagnostics maintain an environmental compliance program, including hiring a third-party waste auditor, and report annually on its progress.

A copy of the complaint and proposed stipulated judgment, which details the aforementioned settlement terms and remains subject to court approval, can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

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