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Attorney General Bonta Announces \$7.5 Million Settlement with Walmart for Illegal Disposal of Hazardous Waste and Medical Waste

OAKLAND – California Attorney General Rob Bonta today announced a settlement with Walmart, resolving allegations that the retail corporation unlawfully disposed hazardous waste and medical waste from their facilities statewide to municipal landfills. As part of the settlement, Walmart will be required to pay \$7.5 million in penalties and costs and comply with injunctive terms. Attorney General Bonta is joined by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the district attorneys of Alameda, Fresno, Monterey, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Joaquin, Solano, Tulare, and Yolo Counties in today's settlement.

"Walmart's illegal disposal of hazardous and medical waste not only violated California laws, but, if left unchecked, posed a threat to human health and the environment. As a result of this investigation and lawsuit, Walmart has taken significant steps to prevent such disposals from happening in the future. This settlement will ensure that Walmart takes the necessary steps to ensure that its hazardous waste is handled and disposed of as required by law," **said Attorney General Bonta**. "At the California Department of Justice, we will continue to hold any entity accountable for violating our environmental laws. I'm grateful to the Department of Toxic Substances Control and district attorneys statewide for their partnership in reaching this important settlement."

"This settlement is the result of DTSC's strict enforcement of hazardous waste laws designed to protect public health and the environment," **said Katherine M. Butler, MPH, Director of DTSC**. "Holding Walmart accountable for this violation of improper hazardous waste disposal sends a clear message: all corporations must adhere to the environmental laws that protect Californians, without exception. This settlement emphasizes the strength of our law enforcement partnerships across all levels of government and DTSC's commitment to holding any and all violators responsible."

"With this settlement, Wal-Mart has demonstrated its understanding of the critical importance of environmental responsibility by taking meaningful steps to address concerns and ensure compliance with state standards," **said San Joaquin County District Attorney Ron Freitas**. "We value their efforts in not only maintaining a cleaner, safer environment for our community but also in continuing to be a strong partner with our office in the fight against retail theft. Together, we are making strides in safeguarding both the environment and the people of San Joaquin County."

"The unlawful disposing of hazardous and medical waste creates an environmental hazard and public health threat," **said Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho**. "This case is another example of how the District Attorney's Office and the Attorney General's Office can work together to protect our environment and ensure that

environmental laws are followed.

“The mismanagement of hazardous wastes can result in fires and injuries – this judgment will help to ensure that retail businesses have appropriate policies and procedures in place to protect the safety of their employees, waste management staff, and the public,” **said Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine M. Pacioni.**

“Large corporations must be held accountable when they do not follow the law and put the health and safety of Alameda County residents at risk,” **said Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price.** “I commend my office’s Consumer Justice Bureau’s active involvement in this investigation which helped bring this settlement forward and holds Walmart to account.”

“The protection of the health and safety of the people of our community and the environment are top priorities for our office. The illegal disposal and mismanagement of hazardous waste by employees pose serious risks to the environment, public health, and worker safety,” **said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer.** “We will continue to work with our prosecution partners around the state to protect the public by holding businesses such as Walmart accountable for its violations of environmental law.”

“This settlement brings accountability that helps to protect our environment from toxic waste,” **said District Attorney Summer Stephan.** “These types of investigations and settlements are a reminder to corporations that they have a responsibility to be a good steward to our environment.”

The settlement is the result of over 70 waste audits conducted by the district attorneys' offices statewide and DTSC from 2015 through 2021. During those audits, the district attorneys' offices reviewed the contents of waste that Walmart had sent from its facilities to municipal landfills and found thousands of containers of toxic aerosols and liquid wastes including spray paints, rust removers, bleach, pesticides, and medical waste, such as over-the counter drugs. The unlawful disposals are alleged to violate the Hazardous Waste Control Law, Medical Waste Management Act, and Unfair Competition Law.

The settlement resolves the allegations above and requires Walmart to pay \$7,500,000 in civil penalties and costs. The settlement also imposes injunctive terms, which require Walmart to hire an independent, third-party auditor to conduct three annual rounds of waste audits at its facilities throughout California during the next four years. Walmart’s auditor must use specific requirements set forth in the settlement to ensure that the waste is thoroughly and accurately reviewed and characterized, and the audit results must be shared with the Attorney General’s Office, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the district attorneys involved in this settlement.

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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