



NEWS RELEASE

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

410 Willoughby, Suite 303
Post Office Box 111800
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1800

Phone: (907) 465-5009 Fax: (907) 465-5070

Contact: Parrish Moses, Investigator, Environmental Crimes Unit, (907) 451-5157

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jury convicts Anchorage man for environmental crimes

Thomas Wood convicted of 3 misdemeanor counts for his actions

February 2, 2007--Anchorage –An Anchorage District Court jury has convicted Thomas M. Wood, age 54, of three misdemeanor counts of permitting the release of a hazardous substance, causing pollution, and illegally disposing of used oil. Following the January 29th convictions, the court imposed concurrent sentences on each count that included 210 days in jail, with 180 days suspended, a fine of \$2,000 with \$2,000 suspended, and 4 years probation. In addition, within the next 2 years, Wood must complete an automotive class at the University of Alaska Anchorage, or elsewhere that teaches proper waste management and disposal practice. Wood was ordered to pay restitution to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for the agency's clean-up and disposal expenses.

Prior to Wood's trial, co-defendant Christopher Pifer, age 23, accepted a plea agreement offered by the Alaska Attorney General's Office to resolve his own similar charges, pleading no contest to a single count of illegally causing pollution. The court, pursuant to the parties' plea agreement, sentenced Pifer to 90 days of suspended jail time, a \$500 suspended fine, three years probation and restitution to DEC in the amount of \$1,500.

The convictions stem from a 2004 Environmental Crimes Unit investigation launched when DEC spill responders recovered three abandoned drums near mile 3.5 of Eklutna Lake Road, north of Anchorage. The drums contained a mixture of used motor oil, transmission fluid, fuels and other solvents. Subsequent laboratory testing demonstrated that the drum mixtures contained elevated levels of lead, benzene, toluene, tetrachloroethane, xylene and other regulated contaminants. One of the drums had leaked a small quantity of its contents to the ground.

Through its investigation, DEC learned that the abandoned drums were from Foreign Engine & Repair, an automotive maintenance shop located in Peters Creek owned by Wood. Wood had improperly managed and combined his shop's waste streams creating the mixtures found in the abandoned drums. Under federal and state law, such wastes must be treated and disposed of at an approved hazardous waste treatment or disposal facility.

According to trial testimony, Wood solicited Pifer to take five drums of wastes to Jim Creek on the Knik River Flats. The drums never made it to that destination. Three of the drums were abandoned on Eklutna Lake Road and the remaining two drums were abandoned at a residence in Peters Creek. DEC recovered all five drums and arranged for their proper disposal.

Causing Pollution is a class "A" Misdemeanor that violates AS 46.03.710. Permitting a Hazardous Substance Release is a class "A" Misdemeanor in violation of AS 46.03.745. Illegally Disposing of Oil is a class "A" Misdemeanor in violation of 18 AAC 60.020.

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To report a spill during normal business hours, call the nearest DEC Area Response Team Office at:

Central (Anchorage)	907-269-3063
Northern (Fairbanks)	907-451-2121
Southeast (Juneau)	907-465-5340
Outside normal business hours, call 1-800-478-9300	



Photo taken by ADEC on February 25, 2004: Abandon drums at drop-off location.



Photo taken by ADEC on February 25, 2004: Up righted abandon drums and cleanup of contaminated snow.



Search warrant team collecting samples from waste containers at Wood's shop.