



GREGORY D. TOTTEN
District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

vcdistrictattorney.com

Twitter: @VenturaDAOoffice

Contact: Dominic Kardum
Senior Deputy District Attorney
Telephone: 805-662-1750
E-mail: dominic.kardum@ventura.org
Approved: WCH *WCH*
Date: August 23, 2019
Release No.: 19-100

**Defendants Santa Clara Waste Water Company and Green Compass
Environmental Solutions Sentenced In 2014 Explosion
and 2015 Possession of Unreported Chemicals**

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Gregory D. Totten announced today that Santa Clara Waste Water Company and Green Compass Environmental Solutions, LLC (corporate defendants) were sentenced for their roles in a November 2014 explosion at 815 Mission Rock Road in Santa Paula that injured numerous employees and first responders, and for the subsequent storage of undisclosed hazardous chemicals on site uncovered by police in 2015.

On November 18, 2014, at approximately 3:45 a.m., an explosion occurred at 815 Mission Rock Road, Santa Paula, a wastewater treatment facility owned and operated by the corporate defendants. The investigation revealed the blast was caused by the mixing and disposal of hazardous chemicals into a 5,040-gallon vacuum truck not rated to hold nor transport such chemicals. Numerous employees of the corporate defendants as well as firefighters and paramedics who responded to the scene and rendered aid were injured either by the initial explosion or by inhaling toxic vapors which developed on site shortly afterwards from the chemicals that exploded out of the vacuum truck.

In November 2015, a search warrant was served at the corporate defendants' facility in Santa Paula which led to the discovery of approximately 5,500 gallons of sodium hydroxide, also known as Petromax, stored within a locked shipping container. These chemicals were required by law to be reported into the California Environmental Reporting System (CERS), yet the corporate defendants' officials had not reported their possession of Petromax since 2013.

At the corporate defendants' sentencing earlier today, each company was placed on three years formal probation and ordered to pay victim restitution in the amount of \$2,647,621.35. Each corporate defendant is prohibited from engaging in any business activity in Ventura County in which it: (1) oversees employee occupational safety; (2) is responsible for filing documentation pertaining to meeting regulatory compliance standards; (3) is responsible for implementing Hazardous Materials Response Plans; (4) is required to collect samples from waste streams for the purpose of waste classification; (5) supervises employees whose duties include handling hazardous materials and waste; (6) is responsible for establishing compliance with an industrial wastewater discharge permit, (7) is involved in the transportation of hazardous waste requiring the completion of a hazardous waste manifest; or (8) interacts with any local, state or federal regulatory agency representative for the purpose of onsite compliance inspections.

To date, \$950,000 in restitution has been collected and distributed to the victims. This amount, combined with the \$2,647,621.35 the corporate defendants were ordered to pay in restitution today, results in a total amount of court-ordered restitution of \$3,597,621.35. Eight other charged individual co-defendants have entered pleas for their respective roles in the 2014 explosion and 2015 conspiracy to hide chemicals from regulatory inspectors. Marlene Faltemier, the final co-defendant whose charges remain pending at this time, is due back in court on September 6, 2019, at 8:30 a.m. in courtroom 22 before Judge Kent M. Kellegrew. The investigation and prosecution of this case is the result of a joint effort by the California Attorney General's Office; the Ventura County District Attorney's Office; the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA); the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT); the State Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA); and the Ventura County Environmental Health Division.

###

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the public prosecutor for the county's 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and other professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.

Follow the Ventura County District Attorney's Office on Twitter @VenturaDAOoffice