



# ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

## NEWS RELEASE



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### Owner of Former Ventura Dry Cleaning Business Settles Hazardous Waste Case



VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that the Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit has reached a civil settlement with Shija Cho, the former owner of Unique Cleaners in Ventura, for the improper disposal of hazardous waste.

The case stems from the abandonment of hazardous materials, including dry cleaning chemicals containing perchloroethylene (PERC), discovered in Los Angeles County and traced back to Unique Cleaners at 2307 East Main Street. Cho operated the dry-cleaning business until it closed in June 2024.

In July 2024, two 55-gallon drums labeled as hazardous waste from Unique Cleaners were reported abandoned in an alleyway in Reseda, Los Angeles County. Laboratory analysis confirmed that the contents were hazardous under both state and federal law due to toxicity levels that far exceeded regulatory thresholds. One drum contained PERC, a dry-cleaning solvent regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, while the second held used filters and sludge from dry cleaning operations.

“Our office is committed to protecting public health and the environment by holding businesses accountable for the safe handling and disposal of hazardous materials,” said District Attorney

Nasarenko. “This case reinforces the responsibility business owners have to manage toxic waste responsibly, from generation to final disposal.”

Under California law, generators of hazardous waste are responsible for ensuring that it is properly stored, transported, and disposed of through licensed facilities. Unique Cleaners failed to provide legally required documentation showing that the waste was collected or disposed of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler.

Evidence, including interviews, photographs, lab reports, and hazardous waste manifests, demonstrated that the drums were unlawfully transported and abandoned off-site.

As part of the settlement, Cho will pay \$32,065 in civil penalties and costs. The settlement also includes injunctive terms requiring compliance with hazardous waste laws at their new dry-cleaning business in Camarillo.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Karen Wold prosecuted the case after District Attorney Environmental Specialist Steve Mattern completed the investigation of Unique Cleaners. The Ventura County District Attorney's Office also thanks the Ventura County Environmental Health Division and the Los Angeles County Fire Department Hazardous Materials Division for their work in this case.

