

## Polluters caught in the act by DA's toxic strike force

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Targets of the Los Angeles County district attorney's toxic strike force can range from a hospital that is improperly disposing of infectious wastes, to a mom-and-pop dry cleaners that is dumping cleaning solvent in the back yard.

To date the strike force's most successful prosecutions have been against manufacturing, salvage and industrial plating firms.

In all, 10 executives have received jail sentences and several others have been ordered to perform community service in the form of public speaking about their crimes and punishments.

The following is a summary of the eight major cases:

- Aaro Inc., a battery recycling firm in south central Los Angeles, was caught dumping acids and heavy metals into the sewers. Company president George Williamson was sentenced to 30 days in jail.

"We went in there like an environmental S.W.A.T. team, which caught them by such a surprise that they continued doing the dumping while police photographers were taking their pictures," Barry Groveman, chief strike force prosecutor, said.

- In October 1983 Benjamin Cook, chairman of the board of Magnum Resources in Northridge, was found guilty of hauling cyanide from his Valley business to Lake Piru in the Los Padres National Forest, where he dumped the waste on property he was leasing for oil exploration.

Cook was sentenced to 90 days in jail and fined \$10,000.

- Culligan Deionized Water Service, Inc., of Los Angeles was found guilty in 1983 of dumping heavy metals into the sewer. The company had contracts with 37 manufacturers to clean the metals out of waste water. The manufacturers thought the waste metals were being disposed of legally.

The company was fined \$100,000 and ordered to provide a year's free water services to its 37 clients. It was the largest fine for toxic dumping in California history. Company president David Peairs was sentenced to 90 days in jail.

- In November 1984 William Park, owner of Park Metals Co. in Chatsworth, was sentenced to 17 months in jail for dumping cancer-causing PCBs in his salvage yard and disposing of PCB-laden transformers in the Mojave Desert.

The strike force also has filed charges against Todd Pacific Shipyards Corp. in San Pedro, the firm that sold the transformers to two middlemen, Tom Logudice and Ted Zeller.

- The strike force filed charges against a national firm, Plessey Precision Metals, and its subsidiary, Precision Specialty Metals in East Los Angeles, for dumping metals and caustic liquids into the sewer.

Company officials suspected they were being observed by investigators, Groveman said, so they built a secret pipeline to take the toxics 300 yards away into another sewer line.

Plessey was fined \$75,000 and forced to pay \$250,000 in cleanup costs. The firm also was forced to place a full-page ad in The Wall Street Journal publicizing its crime and punishment.

Company vice president Charles Wihrlly was sentenced to 120 days in jail. Plant engineer Fred Martin was ordered to perform 1,000 hours of public speaking.

- American Castor Corp. of Los Angeles was found guilty last December of burying 254 drums of toxic solvents in a trench dug secretly on neighboring railroad property.

Company president Carl De La Torre and plant foreman Jesus Romero were sentenced to six months in jail. Company vice president Ramon Garrabo and sales representative Maury Clotzman each were fined \$5,000 and ordered to perform 25 hours of public speaking.

- Bob's Plating Co. in East Los Angeles was caught dumping cyanide wastes in the sewer. Company president Roberto Trimino, Sr. was sentenced to 120 days in jail.

- Flynn Plating Co. of Pacoima pleaded no contest to 35 counts of dumping acid into the sewer. Company president Lawrence W. Flynn was sentenced to 30 days in jail.