



# Department of Justice

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## **MUNCIE BUSINESSMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES**

Timothy M. Morrison, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana, and the Indiana Inter-Agency Environmental Crimes Task Force for the Southern District of Indiana announced today that RICHARD REECE, 68, Muncie, Indiana, was sentenced to a twelve-month term of confinement, including six months in a community confinement facility and six months of home confinement. REECE pleaded guilty to three (3) felony violations of the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), for unlawful transportation, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste, regarding two (2) trailers containing drums and containers of chemical wastes. The wastes were discovered in 2004 at 3401 N. Commerce Road, Muncie, Indiana, based on citizen complaints of chemical odors made to local health officials.

RCRA is the nation's primary hazardous waste legislation and was enacted in 1976 as a response to the growing number of hazardous waste sites resulting from unregulated disposal practices. The objectives of the statute include protection of human health and the environment through stringent regulation of those who generate, treat, store, transport, and dispose of hazardous waste.

Beginning in or around 1996, REECE did business as Synco Technology, Inc., which was a proposed electroplating business at a facility at 9038 W. State Road 32, Farmland, Indiana. REECE accumulated equipment, as well as drums and containers of electroplating chemicals at the Farmland, Indiana facility, but the operation was never started. In or around June 2002, the drums and containers of chemical wastes were transported, in trailers, from his business in Farmland, Indiana, to a vacant lot adjacent to Hoosier Pete's convenience store located at 1401 East 29th Street, Muncie, Indiana.

In or around May 2003, REECE caused the trailers containing the drums and containers of chemical wastes to be transported, from the vacant lot adjacent to Hoosier Pete's convenience store located at 1401 E. 29th Street, Muncie, Indiana to a parking lot in an industrial park located at 3401 N. Commerce Rd., Muncie, Indiana. REECE did not notify the property owner or have authorization from him to put the trailers there. Sample results from the chemicals showed

RCRA hazardous waste characteristics for one or more of the following: corrosivity, toxicity, and ignitability.

United States District Court Larry J. McKinney also ordered REECE to pay a special assessment of \$300 and a total of \$56,574.35 in restitution to U.S. EPA, IDEM and Delaware County for their emergency response costs.

"The defendant simply abandoned dangerous chemicals and walked away, rather than disposing of them safely and legally," said Acting Special Agent in Charge Randall Ashe of the EPA's Criminal enforcement office in Chicago, Illinois.

Special Assistant United States Attorney David P. Mucha and Assistant United States Attorney Steven D. DeBrotta, prosecuted the case for the government. The criminal charges arose from a criminal investigation jointly undertaken by the Criminal Investigation Division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the FBI, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and the Indiana Inter-Agency Environmental Crimes Task Force.

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