

## OFFICER RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

The illegal disposal or abandonment of hazardous waste is a felony in Pennsylvania. Investigating these crimes is time-consuming and usually requires technical expertise. Your job is to protect the public, preserve the crime scene, gather basic information, and notify responsible agencies. If possible, take photographs and prepare a report. Collection of evidentiary samples should be performed by experts to ensure safety, and the technical and legal value of the evidence.

## RESPONSE & SUPPORT AGENCIES

One or more of the following agencies should be contacted upon discovery of an environmental crime:

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)  
**EMERGENCY RESPONSE HOTLINE**  
**1-800-541-2050**  
(Answering 24 Hours)

**The Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General Environmental Crimes Section (ECS)**  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Strawberry Square  
Harrisburg, PA 17120  
**717-787-1340**

## Regional Offices of the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Environmental Crimes Section:

**Pittsburgh**  
**(412) 565-2206**

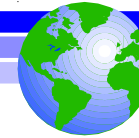
**Erie**  
**(814) 871-4656**

**Norristown**  
**(610) 631-5949**

**Wilkes-Barre**  
**(570) 826-2051**

**Williamsport**  
**(570) 327-3785**

**State College**  
**(800) 255-9564**



# ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

**A GUIDE  
FOR  
PENNSYLVANIA  
LAW  
ENFORCEMENT  
AGENCIES**



Tom Corbett  
Attorney General



Kathleen A. McGinty  
Secretary



**Tom Corbett**  
 Attorney General  
 Commonwealth of  
 Pennsylvania



**Kathleen A. McGinty**  
 Secretary  
 Pennsylvania Department  
 of Environmental Protection

The investigation and prosecution of environmental crimes in Pennsylvania is a cooperative effort between the Office of Attorney General and the Department of Environmental Protection. We have prepared this guide in response to the need for Pennsylvania law enforcement officers to be aware of both Federal and State environmental laws. These laws cover everything from the illegal dumping of hazardous wastes to the filling of protected wetlands. Being on the front lines everyday, you have an important role to play. As with any crime, or emergency, it is critical that you know how to respond to protect both your own safety and that of the public, preserve the crime scene, and ensure apprehension of the responsible parties.

## SAFETY FIRST!

When responding to an environmental crime, an officer's first responsibility is his or her own safety and the safety of the public. Hazardous liquids or fumes from a spill or abandoned container can appear harmless - but may be dangerous or even fatal. Therefore, the following safety rules must be followed:

- ◆ Make initial observations of the scene from a safe distance.
- ◆ Immediately contact the county emergency management agency, giving as much information as possible.
- ◆ Never touch or smell unknown materials.
- ◆ Never attempt to move abandoned drums.
- ◆ Avoid low-lying areas where vapors may settle or concentrate.
- ◆ Don't attempt to stop leaks, close valves or take similar response actions.
- ◆ Don't track toxics into your car.
- ◆ Never enter confined spaces (tunnels, tanks, rooms with inadequate ventilation).
- ◆ Keep untrained or unnecessary people away from the site.

## COMMON EXAMPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

The Attorney General's Environmental Crimes Section prosecutes a wide variety of cases, including:



Dumping or burying hazardous, infectious or other types of waste

Abandoning drums of waste



Falsifying hazardous waste manifests and other documents relating to the transportation or identification of waste

Intentionally or recklessly causing water pollution

