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Travis County District Attorney Rosemary Lehmborg today announced that Christine Giese and Bencor, LLC, were convicted of Texas Water Code violations relating to hazardous waste. The District Attorney's Environmental Protection Unit prosecuted the case.

The charges stemmed from a criminal investigation of drums that were found abandoned in a storage unit on Ponds Springs Road in Austin, Texas. The drums were found to contain a hazardous waste which had been transported from Christine Giese's business located in Brenham, Texas to the Pond Springs storage unit.

The defendant Bencor was ordered to pay a \$50,000 fine and Christine Giese was placed on one year deferred adjudication and ordered to pay \$15,138.86 in restitution.

The conviction is a culmination of the collaborative work of the Texas Environmental Task Force. Lehmborg credited the work of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Environmental Crimes Unit, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Environmental Crimes Unit, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Criminal Investigation Division and the Travis County District Attorney's Office Environmental Protection Unit.

"The defendants orchestrated the illegal transportation and storage of hazardous waste without regard to the dangers it posed," said Ivan Vikin, Special Agent in Charge of EPA's criminal enforcement program in Texas. "The improper handling and storage of this waste put the unsuspecting public at serious risk. Today's sentencing demonstrates that those who refuse to comply with the law will be vigorously prosecuted."

"This is an important case because it involves the illegal transportation and storage of hazardous waste and the impact these toxic materials could have on the citizens of Texas," said Dan McReynolds, manager of TCEQ's Environmental Crimes Unit. "The Task Force supported the TCEQ's Environmental Crimes Unit in the successful investigation and prosecution of the case."

"The Environmental Protection Unit will continue to aggressively prosecute those who harm our natural resources," said District Attorney Rosemary Lehmborg. "This prosecution reflects our commitment to defending the environment."

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