



For Immediate Release

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New Orleans man arrested for illegal disposal of harmful substances, aggravated criminal damage to property

BATON ROUGE – Today, investigators within the Criminal Investigation Division of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality arrested a New Orleans man for felony illegal disposal of harmful substances and aggravated criminal damage to property. Orestes Linares, 54, of New Orleans, is alleged to have hauled chemicals to the Lower 9th Ward and dumped them in a vacant lot near a storm drain.

On March 7, 2016, the City of New Orleans Fire Department and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality Emergency Response personnel received a complaint from City Council employees about drums of chemicals leaking at the 2600 Block of Lizardi Street. Emergency responders found nine drums leaking liquid chemicals which caused a chemical reaction and formed piles of orange colored foam insulation.

Investigators with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's Criminal Investigation Division were able to retrieve identification labels from the drums and trace them back to the original owner, Construction 419 LLC. Investigators learned that Linares, a former employee of Construction 419 LLC, allegedly took the drums without permission, dumped them in the vacant lot on Lizardi Street and intentionally punctured them, allowing their contents to spill out on the ground near a storm drain.

“Since the day I was appointed by the Governor, I have said that this department will not tolerate illegal dumping” said Dr. Chuck Carr Brown, DEQ Secretary. “We owe it to the hard-working business owners and the people of New Orleans to investigate and seek prosecution of the people who commit these types of crimes.”

The City of New Orleans had to hire a cleanup contractor to remove the dumped chemicals from the site. The estimated cost of cleanup was around \$12,000.

If convicted of the crime of disposal of a substance that endangers or that could endanger human life or health, Linares faces possible imprisonment for not more than 10 years, or a fine of not more than \$100,000, or both. If convicted of aggravated criminal damage to property, he faces possible imprisonment for not less than one year nor more than 15 years, or a fine of not more than \$10,000, or both.

The mission of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is to protect the environment and public health. Any persons with knowledge of any spills, releases, odors, fish kills, open burning, waste tires and any other types of environmental incidents may contact the department at 225-219-3640 or Toll Free 1-888-763-5424.

An arrest does not constitute guilt in a criminal case. All evidence compiled during the investigation is presented to the area prosecutors who determine if formal charges are warranted.