



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Pelican Refining charged with air monitoring violations

BATON ROUGE – Today, the U.S. Attorney in Lafayette charged Houston based Pelican Refining Company for violating three felony counts of the Clean Air Act, including filing a false report with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. Pelican Refining operates an oil refinery in Lake Charles. Pelican faces up to \$500,000 in fines for each count or up to twice the financial gain or loss to victims from the alleged violations.

Federal authorities have been investigating Pelican since 2006, when DEQ inspectors discovered illegal discharges of hydrogen sulfide, improperly repaired pollution monitoring and control equipment, and improper leak containment remedies. In addition, oil at the facility was being stored improperly in unrepaired tanks.

“DEQ will aggressively investigate and prosecute any facility found to be skirting environmental laws in order to avoid the environmental and legal responsibilities mandated in their permit,” said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. “DEQ’s core mission is to protect human health and the environment, and violation of the Clean Air Act is a very serious offense. We will continue to work with our local, state and federal partners to ensure such violators are brought to justice.”

An initial appearance date has not been scheduled; however, the plea agreement will be filed at that time.

On July 6, Byron Hamilton, 55, who oversaw the refinery's operations from Houston as president and general manager, pleaded guilty in Lafayette federal court to two misdemeanor endangerment charges under the federal Clean Air Act. He faces up to one year in prison and a \$200,000 fine for each count.