



State of Louisiana
Department of Environmental Quality



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Agencies work together to nab violator of environmental laws

BATON ROUGE -- Investigators from the Department of Environmental Quality worked with officials from the Department of Health and Hospitals, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Evangeline Parish Sheriff's deputies and the Evangeline Parish District Attorney to make an arrest for environmental crimes today.

Deidre M. Lavan and Freddie Lavan, Jr. were charged with illegal discharge of a substance that has potential to harm health or the environment because of the improper disposal of waste connected to the family's grease and sewage removal business. The crime is a felony.

State officials with DHH and DEQ have had long-standing concerns regarding the illegal dumping of septic waste throughout the state. DEQ's Criminal Investigation Unit and the other agencies investigated the claims that the owner and employees of Dee Dee Laven Septic and Grease Service were allegedly collecting sewage from septic tanks and either storing the waste in un-permitted tanks on the family's property or discharging it at numerous illegal places including fields, ditches and into manholes connected to public sewer systems.

"We set up a job for them to come and pick up septic waste in Evangeline Parish," said Peter Ricca, DEQ's environmental manager for criminal investigations. "After they picked up the waste, officials from DHH, DEQ, and the Evangeline Parish Sheriff's Office followed them to see if they handled the waste properly. In this case they didn't."

Ricca said the waste was transported to the owners' home in Lafayette. He also said investigators saw the company pick up another load and then discharge the waste on the side of the road in Evangeline Parish. Samples taken at the scene were high in fecal coliforms, which is an indicator of the presence of sewage.

"DEQ has multiple investigations going on throughout the state with regards to sewer, grease and septic issues," Ricca said. "These are serious issues because of the threat to the environment. We'll work with other state agencies and law-enforcement agencies to assist in stopping these kinds of crimes."