
CEO charged in illegal dumping Hazardous materials from Sterling Supply allegedly were taken to Modern Landfill.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

Gary J. Wasserson, CEO of Sterling Supply, a bankrupt company that stopped operating in 1994, was indicted by a grand jury on three criminal counts for allegedly having hazardous materials moved to a transfer station in Philadelphia and then on to Modern Landfill in 1999, according to the U.S. Attorney's Eastern District of Pennsylvania Office.

Modern Landfill had to pay to repackage the material and send it elsewhere, [Tim O'Donnell] said. It cost \$100,000 to take care of the problem, so the landfill filed suit against Wasserson's company to recover the cost.

The materials that Wasserson is alleged to have moved to York County included four types of ignitable hazardous waste: acetone, sodium perborate tetrahydrate, isopropanol and sodium hydrosulfite, which also can spontaneously combust, according to the indictment.

Full Text (504 words)

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The chief executive officer of a Pennsylvania-based dry cleaning chemical supply company has been charged in federal court with illegally moving hazardous materials to a York County landfill.

Gary J. Wasserson, CEO of Sterling Supply, a bankrupt company that stopped operating in 1994, was indicted by a grand jury on three criminal counts for allegedly having hazardous materials moved to a transfer station in Philadelphia and then on to Modern Landfill in 1999, according to the U.S. Attorney's Eastern District of Pennsylvania Office.

Wasserson could not be reached for comment Friday.

The investigation was completed by the Environmental Protection Agency, FBI and state Department of Environmental Protection.

If convicted, Wasserson could face a maximum sentence of 12 years in prison, a \$150,000 fine, three years of supervised release and a \$300 special assessment.

Sterling Supply once supplied dry cleaning chemicals to businesses in the eastern United States, but it allowed hundreds of containers to build up in a Philadelphia warehouse, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The indictment alleges that Wasserson illegally transported and disposed of much of the company's inventory.

Modern Landfill employees noticed the unusual contents of the truck when it arrived, unexpectedly, in 1999. The landfill sits on the border of Windsor and Lower Windsor townships.

"When part of this load was dumped, it was quite obvious that this load was unacceptable because of the buckets and drums," said Tim O'Donnell, the landfill's general manager.

He estimates that the hazardous portion of the load would have filled a typical garbage truck.

The landfill, O'Donnell said, doesn't accept liquid waste, only empty drums and buckets. Hazardous waste requires special paperwork and can't be disposed of at the landfill, he said.

He said landfill employees didn't want the hazardous material reloaded onto the truck, so they contacted state environmental officials and an environmental cleanup company.

Modern Landfill had to pay to repackage the material and send it elsewhere, O'Donnell said. It cost \$100,000 to take care of the problem, so the landfill filed suit against Wasserson's company to recover the cost.

The materials that Wasserson is alleged to have moved to York County included four types of ignitable hazardous waste: acetone, sodium perborate tetrahydrate, isopropanol and sodium hydrosulfite, which also can spontaneously combust, according to the indictment.

One of the most dangerous was perchloroethylene, a solvent used in dry cleaning, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

That solvent is suspected of causing cancer and has been found to be moderately toxic to people, according to the EPA. It is classified as a pollutant in both EPA air and water regulations.

O'Donnell said he doesn't think that the landfill had done business with Sterling Supply before, and it's "very seldom" that loads of illegal materials arrive.

The materials didn't pose any health risk while they were at the facility, O'Donnell said.

Modern Landfill learned its system of checks works, he said. "We caught it and made sure it didn't stay here," he said.

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