



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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Department of Toxic Substances Control

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**Chief Deputy Director Commends Joint Enforcement Effort:  
Santa Monica Store Owner Pleads Guilty to Illegal Discharge**

Sacramento --- Citing the success of the Los Angeles Federal Environmental Task Force in resolving a case in Santa Monica where an illegal discharge led to the rescue of a sewer worker who suffered third-degree burns and cardiac arrest, Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Chief Deputy Director B.B. Blevins said, "the use of environmental task forces provides efficient investigation, coordination and legal prosecution of those who would endanger the environment and public health."

"The use of task forces provides quick response to high priority criminal, civil and multimedia cases jointly investigated and prosecuted by DTSC, the Attorney General and local and federal prosecutors. They foster consistent application of environmental law and assist environmental prosecutors with cross media information that leads to efficient resolution of cases," Blevins added.

There are 41 environmental task forces in the state. Members provide expertise and coordinate activities and information. Task Forces are used during investigations where it is important to direct a focused enforcement response to expeditiously conclude the investigation. The task force members serve as technical experts and resource guides for interpreting complex hazardous waste statutes and regulations, promoting consistent statewide application of environmental law and developing policies used by local agencies and circuit prosecutors within the task force setting.

In the Santa Monica case, Michael Miller, the owner of Stripper Herk furniture stripping company, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor violation of the federal Clean Water Act. Miller also pleaded guilty to a felony count of storing twenty 50 gallon drums of toxic and flammable waste at the business without a permit.

Miller is expected to be sentenced on October 18, 2004. The maximum punishment for unlawful sewer discharge is one year in federal prison and a \$100,000 fine. The maximum punishment for unlawful storage of hazardous waste is five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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The case was handled by the Los Angeles Federal Environmental Task Force which included: the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the City of Santa Monica Industrial Waste Services; the Santa Monica City Fire Department; the Santa Monica Police Department; the Los Angeles County Fire Department Health Hazardous Materials Division; the California Department of Toxic Substances Control; and the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

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**The Department of Toxic Substances Control's mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment and ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.**