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Target Settles Hazardous Waste Dumping Case for \$22.5 Million

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Target Corp., accused of illegally dumping hazardous waste by the state of California and numerous counties and municipalities, has agreed to pay \$22.5 million to settle the lawsuit.



The case has been ongoing for several years and is part of a broader crack down by California on businesses that violate the state's environmental protection laws, according to a Los Angeles Times. Target is the third big box retailer to reach a multi-million dollar settlement with the state, followed by Walmart and Home Depot recently.

Target is accused of improperly storing, transporting and disposing of bleach, paint, pesticides, batteries, light bulbs and other hazardous materials. State prosecutors also allege that the chain poured chemicals down the drain, threw them out in dumpsters and shipped them to landfills not equipped to handle or dispose of hazardous waste.

Target is also accused of storing incompatible and combustible liquids -- such as ammonia and bleach -- next to each other on shelves and allegedly poured them into dumpsters together, creating numerous fire and safety hazards, the *Los Angeles Times* reported, adding that the retailer also donated more than 5,000 pounds of "unusable, flammable and toxic products" in 2008 to local charities.

Target was issued "repeat violations of California's hazardous waste disposal laws," during an investigation that began in 2005, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. In 2009, the Minneapolis-based retailer was sued by California in Alameda County Superior Court, and an injunction was issued last September to stop the chain from illegal hazardous waste disposal at its 236 California stores.

In the settlement, which still requires final approval by a judge, Target admits no wrongdoing but agreed to pay \$3.4 million to the California attorney general's office, with smaller allocations going to city attorneys in Los Angeles and San Diego as well as district attorney's offices in 20 California counties.

In a statement Target said it "has a comprehensive program to ensure our handling, storage, disposal and documentation of hazardous materials complies with California law, and we train our store teams regularly as part of this program. We will continue to devote substantial resources in order to remain a responsible corporate steward of the environment."

GRD Views: *Did Target get a bad rap here? I suspect they did and think they did the right thing to settle the case and move on. While I have no evidence that the state of California has made strategic use of chasing large companies with lawsuits like this to help address their budget woes, I've heard enough*



stories from both retailers and suppliers to think that may be the case here. With this issue behind them, we believe Target will continue to serve as one of the leaders in the Green Retail movement. -- John Failla for Green Retail Decisions

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