



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Iberville Parish man arrested for alleged illegal dumping and disposal of waste

BATON ROUGE - Today, investigators within the Criminal Investigation Division of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality arrested an Iberville Parish man for the alleged illegal dumping of pollutants into state waterways and the illegal disposal of solid waste.

Tommy M. Francise, 56, of Plaquemine, is alleged to have knowingly dumped grease onto the ground and into state waterways during the production of biodiesel at his residence.

Following a complaint from Iberville parish, civil inspectors from DEQ's Inspection Division conducted a complaint investigation at Francise's residence on August 9, 2012 and found several violations involving illegal dumping. Their findings were forwarded to DEQ's Criminal Investigation Division which led to the execution of the search warrant and subsequent arrest.

During the execution of a search warrant at Francise's residence, investigators with the Iberville Parish Sheriff's Office and DEQ's Criminal Investigations Division found an area where used cooking oil was being used for the production of biodiesel. A large area of grease-contaminated soil was present at the site, and used cooking oil and grease were being discharged into the canal behind the residence. Areas of vegetation at the site were destroyed, including vegetation in the canal behind the residence.

Francise was arrested on identical charges at the same location in April 2010. He pled guilty to the charges in March 2012, and is currently on probation. The court ordered Francise to abide by state environmental laws and regulations as a condition of his probation.

"DEQ encourages citizens to immediately report any illegal dumping activity to DEQ and to their local or parish law enforcement authority," said Jeff Nolan, Manager of DEQ's Criminal Investigation Division. "We will continue to aggressively investigate and prosecute any individual or business found to be engaging in illegal dumping anywhere in the state."

If convicted of the crime of knowingly discharging pollutants to waters of the state, Francise faces possible imprisonment for not more than three years with or without hard labor, or a fine of not more than \$50,000, or both.

The mission of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is to protect the environment and public health. Any persons with knowledge of any spills, releases, odors, fish kills, open burning, waste tires and any other types of environmental incidents may contact the department at 225-219-3640 or Toll Free 1-888-763-5424.

An arrest does not constitute guilt in a criminal case. All evidence compiled during the investigation is presented to the area prosecutors who determine if formal charges are warranted.