



For Immediate Release:
Jan. 28, 2020

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Baton Rouge man arrested for illegal discharge and disposal, criminal damage

BATON ROUGE – Monday, investigators within the Criminal Investigations Section of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality arrested a Baton Rouge man for felony illegal discharges of pollutants to waters of the state, felony illegal disposal of substance that endangers or that could endanger human health, and simple criminal damage to property.

John Louis Hardy, 68, of Baton Rouge, allegedly purchased a warehouse located at 5055 Choctaw Drive in April 2017. The warehouse was a former tannery located adjacent to Hardy's property located at 2553 Kincaid Avenue.

On April 8, 2019, LDEQ Emergency Response personnel, along with members of the Baton Rouge Fire Department, responded to an odor complaint at the corner of Choctaw Drive and Kincaid Avenue. Witnesses at the scene described several men, employed by Hardy, moving drums and containers from the former tannery and dumping them on the driveway outside of the warehouse. Some of the liquid substances flowed into a nearby ditch and began emitting a rotten egg odor.

LDEQ Emergency Response personnel, along with members of the Baton Rouge Fire Department, monitored the area for hydrogen sulfide, and found elevated readings of this toxic gas throughout the area during the incident. As a result, the Baton Rouge Police Department closed Kincaid Avenue to all traffic for several days after the incident. The City-Parish of East Baton Rouge paid more than \$300,000 for remediation of the area.

“Illegal dumping of wastes into the waters of the state will not be tolerated, and LDEQ will continue working with our local, state and federal law enforcement partners to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law,” LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown said.

If convicted of the crime of knowingly illegally disposing of a substance that endangers or could endanger human health, Hardy faces possible imprisonment for not more than ten years with or without hard labor, or a fine of not more than \$100,000, or both. If convicted of knowingly illegally disposing pollutants to waters of the state, Hardy faces possible imprisonment for not more than three years with or without hard labor, or a fine of not less than \$5,000 nor more than \$50,000. If convicted of simple criminal damage to property, Hardy faces possible imprisonment for not less than one year nor more than 10 years, or a fine of not more than \$10,000, 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.