



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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### **Seven arrested for knowingly submitting false records to DEQ**

**BATON ROUGE** – Today, the Louisiana Environmental Crimes Task Force completed the arrests of seven individuals for knowingly filing or maintaining false public records with DEQ in connection with the vehicle emissions program. Investigators within the Criminal Investigation Division of DEQ, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Public Safety conducted the multi-agency investigation which focused on the following businesses:

- **Terry's Exxon**, 117 N. Airline Highway, Gonzales
- **Mudiea's Car Care**, 4149 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge
- **Franklin's Auto**, 2154 Monroe Ave., Baton Rouge

The seven individuals who have been arrested and the counts against them are:

- **Yolande Ledet**, 44, (Terry's Exxon), arrested on March 19, 17225 Trinidad Drive, Prairieville, 65 counts of filing a false public document.
- **Chad Ledet**, 41, (Terry's Exxon), arrested on March 19, 17225 Trinidad Drive, Prairieville, 29 counts of filing a false public document.
- **Duc "Michael" Nguyen**, 24, (Mudiea's Car Care), arrested on March 24, 775 Doncaster Drive, Baton Rouge, 28 counts of filing a false public document.
- **Canh Nguyen**, 48, (Mudiea's Car Care), arrested on March 24, 775 Doncaster Drive, Baton Rouge, nine counts of filing a false public document.
- **Haytham Amous**, 48, (Mudiea's Car Care), arrested on March 20, 415 Bancroft Way, Baton Rouge, five counts of filing a false public document.
- **Jerry Franklin**, 34, (Franklin's Auto), arrested on March 24, 2014, 4683 Yvonne Drive, Baton Rouge, 38 counts of filing a false public document.
- **Michael Edwards**, 38, (Franklin's Auto), arrested on March 24, 3423 Anna St., Baton Rouge, 24 counts of filing a false public document.

Investigators have obtained an arrest warrant for **Hoc D. Nguyen**, 775 Doncaster Drive, Baton Rouge for 69 counts of filing false public documents. Investigators learned that Hoc D. Nguyen is out of the country. He is expected to return in April and will be met by investigators.

Under state law, owners of vehicles registered in the five-parish ozone non-attainment area of East Baton Rouge, Livingston, Ascension, Iberville, and West Baton Rouge parishes are required to participate in annual vehicle emissions testing during their annual vehicle safety inspection at state-certified testing locations. The vehicle emissions program is designed to identify vehicles with emissions equipment problems. Vehicles with partially or non-functioning emissions equipment contribute to high ozone levels in the five-parish non-attainment area.

Results of the vehicle emissions tests are collected and submitted electronically to DEQ by the businesses certified to conduct the testing. Vehicles weighing more than 10,000 pounds are exempt from emissions testing requirements.

During the past two years, investigators allege that employees working for the three businesses participated in various schemes to pass vehicles for emissions testing. One of the schemes involved manually changing vehicle weights in the computer system so that their weights were listed at more than 10,000 pounds. Another scheme involved using data from a vehicle that was known to pass the emissions test and then manually switching the vehicle identification information with the vehicle that failed the emissions test. Under each scheme, the false information was then submitted electronically to DEQ.

“We are committed to pursuing, arresting and prosecuting any individuals who violate the laws that protect the public health and environment of Louisiana,” DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch said. “Our CID personnel, working with Louisiana State Police and the EPA, did an exemplary job in this case.”

“Complete and accurate tests of vehicle emissions are necessary to protect the public from harmful air pollutants,” said Ivan Vikin, Special Agent in Charge of EPA’s criminal enforcement program in Louisiana. “This case is a textbook example of government agencies working together to protect the public and the environment. Inspectors who knowingly falsify emissions documents will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

If convicted of the crime of knowingly filing or maintaining a false public record to DEQ, each of the accused face possible imprisonment for not more than five years with or without hard labor, or a fine of not more than \$5,000, or both for each count.

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.*