

OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**Re: People v. Bed Bath & Beyond, Inc., Ventura County Superior Court
Case No. 56-2020-00545627-CU-MC-VTA**

***Bed Bath & Beyond to Pay \$1.49 Million in Settlement of Environmental Violations
Joint Prosecution by 31 California Prosecutors***

District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today that the Ventura County Superior Court has ordered New Jersey-based Bed Bath & Beyond, Inc. (“Bed Bath & Beyond”) to pay \$1,498,750 as part of a settlement of a civil environmental prosecution. The Santa Barbara County District Attorney’s Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit collaborated with 30 other California District Attorneys and the Los Angeles City Attorney to achieve this result.

The judgment is the culmination of a multijurisdictional civil enforcement lawsuit filed last month in Ventura County Superior Court alleging that more than 200 Bed Bath & Beyond stores throughout California (including Cost Plus, buybuy BABY, Harmon, Harmon Face Values, World Market, and Cost Plus World Market stores) unlawfully handled, transported, and disposed of batteries, electronic devices, ignitable liquids, aerosol products, cleaning agents, and other flammable, reactive, toxic, and corrosive materials, at local landfills that were not permitted to receive such wastes.

The investigation was initiated by the Ventura County District Attorney’s Office Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit (VCDAO CEPU) after a fire broke out in December 2015 at the City of Oxnard’s Del Norte Transfer Facility. The fire was caused by a load of store waste from the trash compactor of the Oxnard Bed Bath & Beyond store. The bagged store waste suddenly burst into flames when a city employee used a front-end loader to spread the freshly dumped trash pile. A subsequent investigation by the VCDAO CEPU led to the recovery of numerous items of regulated waste, including several electronic items and hazardous waste, lithium batteries, and a small can of lighter fluid.

Only four months later, in April 2016, the Oxnard Fire Department responded to a fire emergency in the trash compactor attached to the rear of the Oxnard Bed Bath & Beyond store. After that fire was extinguished, a VCDAO environmental specialist inspected the waste and again discovered numerous items of regulated waste, including batteries, broken compact fluorescent bulbs, and various discarded electronic devices.

Following these local events, the VCDAO CEPU worked in conjunction with other district attorneys, a city attorney, and local environmental regulatory officials throughout California to conduct a series of undercover inspections of Bed Bath & Beyond store waste around the state. These inspections revealed that Bed Bath & Beyond had been routinely and systematically sending regulated hazardous wastes from stores to local landfills throughout California.

When notified of the investigation, Bed Bath & Beyond took steps to cooperate and to dedicate additional resources towards environmental compliance and improving its regulated waste management program, including performing regular self-audits of its compactors and waste bins throughout California.

Under the final judgment, Bed Bath & Beyond must pay \$1,327,500 in civil penalties and reimbursement of investigation and prosecution costs, of which \$31,500 will be paid to the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office and \$1,150 to the Santa Barbara County Department of Environmental Health. The company will pay an additional \$171,250 to fund supplemental environmental projects furthering environmental enforcement in California. The retailer will also be bound under the terms of a permanent injunction prohibiting similar future violations of law.

District Attorney Dudley said, "Hazardous waste laws must be enforced to prevent long-term threats to public health, air quality, and water quality, and to prevent the costs of proper hazardous waste management from being absorbed by taxpayers. We are grateful that Bed Bath & Beyond cooperated with our enforcement efforts."

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