

OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

JOYCE E. DUDLEY
District Attorney



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Joyce E. Dudley

APPROVED BY JOYCE E. DUDLEY, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Christopher Dalbey, Deputy District Attorney

CONTACT (805) 568-2436

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

***Whole Foods to Pay \$1.6 Million in Hazardous Waste Settlement
Stores throughout the State improperly handled and disposed of hazardous waste***

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today that Yolo County Superior Court Judge Thomas E. Warriner has ordered Whole Foods Market California Inc. and two related entities to pay \$1,643,500 as part of a settlement of a civil-environmental prosecution. Over \$200,000 of this amount will help support various environmental projects, including the prosecution of environmental violations in counties that lack the expertise and resources to prosecute these types of violations. This resolution was a direct result of the work of local regulatory agencies, 21 California District and City Attorneys, including the Santa Barbara County District Attorney, and Whole Foods.

According to the District Attorneys' complaint, Whole Foods Market California Inc., Mrs. Gooch's Natural Food Markets Inc., and WFM-WO Inc., mishandled hazardous wastes and materials throughout the state over a five-year period. These hazardous wastes and materials included batteries, electronic devices, ignitable liquids, aerosol products, cleaning agents, and other flammable, reactive, toxic, and corrosive materials. The settlement resolves the allegations made in the District Attorneys' complaint.

"All businesses that operate in Santa Barbara County must comply with state environmental laws, and we are pleased that today's settlement resolves this matter with Whole Foods. Due to the cooperation of the Whole Foods companies throughout the investigation and prosecution, we were able to work toward a fair resolution," said District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley.

At the start of the investigation, Yolo County regulators found the companies' documentation of employee hazardous waste training to be incomplete. A statewide check confirmed these deficiencies were systemic.

The judgment announced today was designed to prevent Whole Foods stores from committing similar hazardous-waste violations in the future. The judgment requires Whole Foods Market California Inc., Mrs. Gooch's Natural Food Markets Inc., and WFM-WO Inc. to properly label, package, and store hazardous waste to minimize the risk of exposure to employees and customers, and to ensure that incompatible wastes do not combine to cause dangerous chemical reactions. The judgment also requires the companies to properly document their hazardous waste and dispose of their hazardous waste at authorized disposal facilities.

Under the settlement, the Whole Foods entities must pay \$1,202,800 in civil penalties, \$202,800 to reimburse the costs of the investigation, and \$237,900 to fund supplemental environmental projects furthering consumer protection and environmental enforcement in California. Of these moneys, the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office will receive \$3,750 in civil penalties and \$900 in cost recovery, and Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services will receive \$1,500 in civil penalties. The Whole Foods entities must also hire an employee to strengthen the companies' hazardous waste programs.
