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Contact: Leslie Wolf Branscomb at
lawolf@sandiego.gov or (619) 533-5896

Firestone to Pay Penalties in Hazardous Waste Case *Auto Care Giant Settles With 29 California Counties and Cities*

City Attorney Mara W. Elliott announced today that Firestone Complete Auto Care has agreed to a nearly \$4 million settlement with 29 cities and counties throughout California, including the City of San Diego. The auto care retail chain was sued in a civil prosecution in a wide-ranging environmental protection case that alleged the company unlawfully disposed of hazardous waste.

The Court ordered \$2.865 million in civil penalties to be paid by Bridgestone Retail Operations, LLC, the company that does business as Firestone Complete Auto Care at more than 150 locations in California.

The civil complaint, filed in Santa Clara County Superior Court, alleged that the automotive repair company did not properly manage hazardous waste, such as solvents, automotive fluids, aerosols, batteries, and electronic devices. The settlement also resolves allegations that the company failed to redact or shred confidential customer information before throwing the paperwork in the trash.

“We expect large companies like Firestone to be good stewards of the environment,” San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“By joining with other prosecutors, we were able to bring them into compliance. All of us have a duty to keep our air and water clean.”**

“Hazardous waste does not belong in the air, on the ground, in the water, or in this case, headed to a regular landfill,” Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen said. **“We will continue to work with our fellow prosecutors around the state to enforce our strong environmental protection laws.”**

In addition to paying civil penalties, Firestone was ordered to pay \$350,000 for the cost of the investigation and \$725,000 in agreed-upon compliance and training expenditures. Firestone cooperated with prosecutors during the investigation and took steps to improve its compliance with the environmental and consumer protection violations brought to its attention.

San Diego’s share of the civil penalties will be \$100,000, an amount based on violations by Firestone locations within the City of San Diego. The funds will be used to pay for the City Attorney’s continued consumer and environmental enforcement activities.

The investigation began in 2016 when Santa Clara County and Alameda County District Attorney investigators conducted unannounced inspections of Firestone trash containers, revealing non-empty containers of hazardous waste and pages of customer records. Additional inspections in those counties and in San Diego, San Bernardino, and Orange counties took place over the next three years.

The Firestone judgment is the latest in a series of environmental civil enforcement actions successfully brought by California prosecutors against large automotive service providers and retailers. The prior judgments, which included civil penalties and injunctions, were against Service King (2019, \$2.3 million), Pep Boys (2019, \$3.7 million), AutoZone (2019, \$11 million), Cooks Collision (2018, \$1.5 million), AutoNation (2018, \$3.3 million), and O'Reilly Auto Parts (2016, \$9.8 million).

This case was handled in San Diego by Deputy City Attorney Julie Rau of the office's Affirmative Civil Enforcement Unit. Reports of hazardous waste dumping in the City of San Diego may be made to the City Attorney's Office at (619) 533-5800. Complaints may also be filed online, by filling out the ACE Complaint Form here: <https://www.sandiego.gov/cityattorney/divisions/civillitigation/civilprosecution>

The San Diego City Attorney's Affirmative Civil Enforcement (ACE) Unit pursues public interest causes of action on behalf of the People of the State of California under the Unfair Competition Law, including consumer privacy, predatory lending, and unsafe and dangerous products. The ACE Unit enforces laws that protect consumers, employees, and the environment, and advocates for change when existing laws fall short. Through its own litigation and by collaborating with others inside and outside government, the ACE Unit protects public health and safety, restores environmental quality, and sustains economic vitality.

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