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Unlawful waste facilities not worth the risk

Recent court penalties have highlighted the risks involved in operating or using illegal waste depots.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is reminding anyone considering setting up a landfill, transfer station or stockpiling waste without approval from the EPA that the consequences can be significant.

A decision last month in the Environment, Resources and Development Court resulted in total penalties of almost \$1.2 million for the operators of illegal commercial-scale facilities at Penfield and Direk.

One of the companies that delivered waste to these depots was previously fined \$12,600 and will pay \$500,000 towards the cost of cleaning up the sites.

EPA Acting Chief Executive Andrew Pruszinski said completed EPA prosecutions in recent years involved fines of tens of thousands of dollars each for a number of unlicensed operators.

In 2020 a company was fined almost \$50,000 for operating unlicensed waste depots at Wingfield and Largs Bay, and another was fined \$56,000 for running an unlicensed depot at Para Hills West.

“It’s clear that the court takes this matter seriously,” Mr Pruszinski said.

“The licensing system helps ensure the protection and safety of the community and the environment by funding the work of the EPA to regulate commercial activity and maintain standards.

“Rogue operators who seek to profit by undercutting licensed businesses could be facing large penalties and clean-up costs when they are caught.

“A worse outcome is that the community can be left to bear the cost of cleaning up these sites.”

Unlicensed waste depots can be unsightly and can pose threats to the health of the community and the environment and cause site contamination when hazardous waste, including material containing asbestos, is not dealt with appropriately.

Mr Pruszinski said it was important that waste transporters ensured that any depot receiving their material was authorised by the EPA.

“As waste transporters require an EPA licence, these operators should understand the system and the need to ensure any waste facility they use is also licensed,” he said.

More information about licensing is available [here](#).

Anyone can report an incident or suspected unlicensed activity on the EPA’s 24-hour hotline, (08) 8204 2004 or 1800 623 445 (non-metropolitan callers), or by emailing epainfo@sa.gov.au