



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Cooks Collision, Inc. Settles Environmental Protection Lawsuit Brought by California District Attorney's Related to Hazardous Auto Body Repair Waste**

**Martinez, Calif.** – Contra Costa County District Attorney Diana Becton announced today that her office, with 14 other District Attorney's Offices in California, settled an environmental protection action against Cooks Collision, Inc. The settlement was based on violations of the storage and disposal of hazardous materials and hazardous wastes. The action was filed in Sacramento County.

Cooks Collision, Inc. is an automotive and auto body repair shop that operates 38 facilities throughout California. In the ordinary course of business Cooks Collision, Inc. stores hazardous materials and generates hazardous wastes. Inspections by the Sacramento County Environmental Management Department found that certain Cooks Collision facilities in Sacramento County were out of compliance with the hazardous materials and hazardous waste laws. District Attorney investigators from Contra Costa County and several other counties then conducted undercover inspections of Cooks Collision, Inc.'s trash containers, which revealed the illegal disposal of hazardous auto body sanding dust, sanding pads, automotive paints, clear coats, solvents, non-empty aerosols, and other hazardous substances used during the auto body repair process.

District Attorney Diana Becton said "The settlement approved by the judge underscores our work to protect Contra Costa County's natural resources. Businesses must take care and follow the law in the disposal of hazardous wastes and ensure they are handled properly."

In accordance with the Hazardous Waste Control Law and Hazardous Materials Release Response Plans and Inventory Law, the stipulated judgment mandates training, reporting and compliance with the regulations on hazardous materials, and hazardous wastes. The settlement totaling \$1,525,000 requires Cooks Collision to pay \$900,000 in civil penalties and \$325,000 for investigative costs. Cooks Collision will also make an additional payment of \$150,000 to fund a research project at California State University Chico focused on identifying a means for recycling by-products produced during the vehicle repair process. Cooks Collision, Inc. was cooperative throughout the investigation and implemented training and compliance programs at each of its facilities. Cooks Collision, Inc. will continue to fund a \$150,000 compliance program for the next two years.

The case was brought by the District Attorney's offices of Alameda, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Los Angeles, Marin, Napa, Placer, Riverside, Sacramento, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara,

Solano, Ventura, and Yolo counties, where Cooks Collision's auto body repair shops are located. Cooks Collision cooperated with the District Attorney's investigation and took steps to improve its compliance with the environmental laws brought to its attention by the prosecutors.

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