

# DA Anne Marie Schubert Announces Environmental Protection Settlement with Auto Shop



## Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

*Semper Justitia*

Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert 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 laws regarding 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 the State of California. In the ordinary course of business Cooks Collision stores hazardous materials and generates hazardous wastes. Inspections by the Environmental Management Department found that several Cooks Collision facilities in Sacramento County were out of compliance with the hazardous materials and hazardous waste laws. After further investigation, it was determined that other counties had similar compliance issues.

The State of California has a comprehensive statutory and regulatory framework that mandates a "cradle to grave" system known as the Hazardous Waste Control Law ("HWCL"). The HWCL system is maintained to record the generation, registration, tracking, storage, treatment, and disposal of hazardous wastes. The State also mandates notification, handling, training and spill/release reporting of hazardous materials under the Hazardous Materials Release Response Plans and Inventory Law.

These provisions provide for the protection of the public and the environment from present or potential risks posed by hazardous materials and wastes.

In accordance with the HWCL and Hazardous Materials Release Response Plans and Inventory Law, the stipulated judgment mandates training, reporting and compliance by Cooks Collision with the regulations on hazardous materials and hazardous wastes. Cooks Collision will also be required to pay \$1,525,000 as part of this settlement, of which \$900,000 is in civil penalties and \$325,000 is for investigative costs. An additional payment of \$150,000 by Cooks Collision will fund a research project at Chico State focused on identifying a means for recycling by-products produced during the vehicle repair process. Cooks Collision was cooperative throughout the investigation and implemented training and compliance programs at each of its facilities. Cooks Collision has agreed to fund a \$150,000 compliance program for the next two years.

District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert said, "Protecting our environment from hazardous wastes is important to the health and safety of our community. Hazardous materials and wastes are a routine component in many business operations, and precautions must be taken to protect the environment and public safety."