

17 Metro Vancouver waste haulers penalized almost \$350,000 in 2012 for banned trash items

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Metro Vancouver penalized 17 waste haulers about \$350,000 in 2012 for delivering trash to regional solid-waste facilities that contained banned items ranging from corrugated cardboard to yard trimmings and electronics, The Vancouver Sun has learned. Waste Management of Canada was fined \$95,915.

Photograph by: Steve Bosch, PNG

Metro Vancouver penalized 17 waste haulers about \$350,000 for delivering trash to regional solid-waste facilities that contained banned items ranging from corrugated cardboard to yard trimmings and electronics, The Vancouver Sun has learned.

The 13 private and four municipal haulers were assessed the “surcharge fees” in 2012, including \$95,915 to Waste Management of Canada, \$66,607 to Smithrite Disposal, and \$39,501 to Super Save Disposal, a document released following a freedom-of-information request shows.

Four municipal haulers were also part of the problem: \$17,551 to the City of Burnaby, \$2,500 to the City of White Rock, \$1,291 to the City of Port Coquitlam, and \$1,250 to the District of North Vancouver.

Although all 17 haulers are identified in the freedom-of-information document, penalties assessed five private operators — Northwest Waste Systems, BFI Canada, NSD Disposal, Halton Recycling, and Waste Control Services — have been withheld pending appeals to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The Sun will report the penalties against those five companies as they become available.

Paul Henderson, Metro Vancouver’s general manager of solid waste services, explained in an interview that a truckload of waste that contains more than five per cent corrugated cardboard is assessed a surcharge amounting to 50 per cent of the tipping fee for that load. A television found within a load generates a flat surcharge of \$50.

The penalties are meant to serve as a deterrent to haulers dumping items for which there are recycling programs; ultimately, it is considered haulers' responsibility to deal with their customers to keep banned items out of the waste stream.

Waste Management of Canada spokesman Robin Freedman said the company "takes any surcharge extremely seriously and is committed to working with our commercial and industrial customers to reduce banned materials from their waste stream."

When surcharges are levied, Waste Management goes back to those customers to educate them about the fines and the list of banned materials. "We also perform waste audits with our customers so that they can fully understand what they are throwing out and what needs to remain out of their garbage containers," she said.

Henderson noted cardboard has dropped to 18 per cent of violations in 2012 from 38 per cent in 2009. Electronics currently represent the highest violations at 31 per cent.

The list of prohibited items has grown steadily since 1997, and also includes paint, gypsum, oil, tires, metal appliances, mattresses, plastic, paper, and blue-box recyclables, with organics expected to be included in 2015.

Doug Mass, president of the Waste Management Association of B.C., could not be reached to comment Monday. Mass is general manager of Maple Leaf Disposal, which was assessed penalties of \$14,681 in 2012.

Six contracted inspectors looked at 20 per cent of inbound loads to solid-waste facilities in 2012, including seven transfer stations, the Burnaby waste-to-energy incinerator, and City of Vancouver landfill in Delta.

"They do visual inspections, they don't dig through the load to see what's inside," Henderson noted. A seventh inspector has been hired in 2014.

The inspectors uncovered 5,139 violations during 162,398 inspections, for an overall failure rate of 3.2 per cent, up marginally from 2.9 per cent in 2011. Private commercial haulers had a violation rate of eight per cent compared with 2.4 per cent for municipal haulers and 0.4 per cent for residential drop-offs. The comparative figures for 2013 have not been released yet.

Penalties to other private haulers in 2012 included: \$3,779 to Superior Disposal, \$2,845 to First Choice Disposal, \$1,175 to Wescan Disposal, and \$1,077 to Cascades Recovery.

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Note that the wages paid the inspectors likely exceeded the penalties collected! - cjk