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## Cohen, LAI guilty of illegal hazardous waste storage; separate suit pending

October 23, 2008 | 11:07 AM

Lawrence Aviation Industries and its owner and operator, Gerald Cohen, 74, pleaded guilty in July for their roles in storing more than 12 tons of hazardous waste in violation of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) at LAI's principal place of business in Port Jefferson Station, according to a press release from the U.S. Attorney's office. Under the terms of their plea agreements, Cohen faces five years' imprisonment, and both defendants face maximum fines of \$50,000 for each day of the violation, which could total in excess of \$35 million, the release said.

During the guilty pleas, Cohen and LAI admitted to illegally storing over 12 tons of corrosive hazardous waste material.

A separate civil lawsuit brought by the United States is pending against LAI, Cohen, and six parcels of land under the federal Superfund statute to recover over \$8 million in clean-up costs previously incurred by the Environmental Protection Agency at LAI's manufacturing facility, as well as a judgment of liability for future clean-up costs to be incurred at the LAI site, according to the July press release.

FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Mark J. Mershon stated, "The defendants admitted to illegal conduct that posed a threat not only to the environment but to people. Enforcement of our environmental laws is important not only to protect natural resources but to protect human life."

DEC Regional Director Peter A. Scully said, "DEC has been actively involved in the investigation and monitoring of the site and looks forward to working with EPA to ensure that remediation of environmental impacts resulting from LAI's significant violations are completed and protective of the public."

*hazardous waste - bag waste  
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