

NY industrial polluter sentenced to year and a day

By FRANK ELTMAN | Associated Press Writer

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GARDEN CITY, N.Y. - A titanium factory owner who admitted storing more than 12 tons of corrosive hazardous waste on his property, creating an oozing green mess that prosecutors said looked like a horror movie scene, was sentenced Friday to a year and a day in prison. Gerald Cohen, 75, pleaded guilty last year to violating the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which governs how people dispose of hazardous waste. He was the owner of the now defunct Lawrence *Aviation Industries Inc.*, which made titanium sheets used primarily for the aeronautics industry. Cohen was arrested in 2006 on charges of illegally storing the hazardous waste, creating a mess that a prosecutor said at the time "literally looked like a science fiction horror movie." Photos taken by prosecutors showed dozens of drums oozing green liquid and trash littering the 125-acre site in Port Jefferson Station. Soils, sediments, surface water and groundwater at and around the site are still contaminated, federal officials said, and the groundwater is corrupted by a plume of trichloroethylene, a solvent used in manufacturing and considered a hazardous substance by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Besides facing millions of dollars in fines, which will be determined by a federal judge later, Cohen was ordered to pay \$105,000 in restitution just for the cleanup of the drums. The EPA has a separate lawsuit pending under the federal Superfund law that seeks to recover \$8 million in cleanup costs already incurred, spokeswoman Elizabeth Totman said. Mark Lesko, a former U.S. attorney who prosecuted Cohen and now serves as the town supervisor on eastern *Long Island* where the factory was located, said officials believe the plume has since moved perilously close to a harbor leading to Long Island Sound. He said there's "a sense of urgency" that the area be cleaned. "Gerald Cohen was a one-man wrecking crew when it came to destroying the environment," Lesko said. "It is important that he spend the next year of his life paying the price for that destruction." Cohen's lawyer, Anthony LaPinta, declined to comment after the sentencing in federal court in Central Islip.

Owner of Superfund site gets a year in prison

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The owner of a former Port Jefferson Station aeronautics company was sentenced to serve a year and a day in prison for dumping tons of hazardous chemicals at what is now one of Long Island's most notorious toxic waste sites, federal court officials said Friday. Gerald Cohen, chief executive of Lawrence Aviation Industries, was ordered to pay \$105,816 in restitution. He may also face fines, a matter to be decided next month when the company is sentenced for its role in the dumping. The sentence handed down in federal court in Central Islip *will serve as a lesson to those who refuse to comply with environmental laws, officials said.* Cohen, 75, of St. James, pleaded guilty last year to illegally storing highly corrosive hazardous waste at the company's 125-acre property, now a federal Superfund site. *More than 1,300 drums of industrial solvents, acid waste and sludge have been found over the years at the site, a former turkey farm where the defense subcontractor made metal components between 1959 and the 1990s.*

"For years, this company illegally stored hazardous waste in blatant violation of environmental laws meant to protect the public," state environmental commissioner Pete Grannis said in a statement. "Forcing the company and its chief executive to pay a stiff price for their actions not only holds them accountable but also serves as a strong deterrent to others." Cohen's attorney did not return a call seeking comment. The federal government has sued Cohen for more than \$8 million in cleanup costs already spent on the site. The total cost is estimated at more than \$20 million.