



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Hawai'i Department of Health determines Hū Honua Bioenergy violated state water pollution laws with illegal discharge

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) Clean Water Branch is pursuing an environmental enforcement action against the Hū Honua Bioenergy facility in Pepe'ekeo on Hawai'i Island. Preliminary findings from the Clean Water Branch's investigation confirm Hū Honua Bioenergy personnel caused an unauthorized discharge of industrial wastewater from their facility's treatment system on Friday morning, Nov. 9, 2018.

"The discharge was a blatant disrespect of the environmental laws that govern this highly regulated industry," said Health Director Bruce Anderson. "The history of concern over the operations of this facility emphasize the need for the Department of Health to take swift action on this violation."

On Tuesday, Nov. 20, 2018, DOH Clean Water Branch enforcement personnel conducted an inspection at the Hū Honua facility in response to a reported discharge of boiler cleaning wastewater. Inspectors interviewed Hū Honua management, environmental personnel and workers who were onsite the day of the discharge. The facility's temporary wastewater treatment system was also inspected as the source of the discharge.

"While in general, the department does not provide information about ongoing investigations, given the public nature of this case and community concerns, we are confirming the cause of the spill and moving forward on the enforcement process," said Keith Kawaoka, deputy director of Environmental Health. "Fortunately, our staff did not observe visible damage to the environment or determine an imminent threat to the health of the public from the discharge."

The DOH Clean Water Branch is continuing their investigation; further information to determine the volume and chemical characteristics of the unauthorized discharge is still being collected. A formal report with recommendations for enforcement requirements and penalties will be completed. For unlawful discharges to state waters, violators face potential civil penalties of up to \$25,000 per day per violation and potential criminal prosecution.

The Hawai'i Department of Health's Clean Water Branch protects the health of residents and visitors who enjoy the state's coastal and inland water resources. The Branch also protects and restores inland and coastal waters for marine life and wildlife. This is accomplished through statewide coastal water surveillance and watershed-based environmental management using a combination of permit issuance, water quality monitoring and investigation, water quality violation enforcement, polluted runoff control, and public education.

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