

DEQ fines Sisters farmer \$4,400 for oil spills

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DEQ Issues Penalty to Farm and Ranchland Property Owner Arland Keeton for Failure to Comply with State Spill Rules

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has issued a \$4,400 civil penalty to Arland Keeton, a resident of the Deschutes County community of Sisters, for failing to clean up spills or releases of used oil from several 55-gallon drums and a 1,000-gallon oil tank on farm and ranchland property he owns at 69126 Holmes Road near Sisters.

During an Oct. 24, 2006 compliance inspection at the property, DEQ staff observed two areas where significant releases of used oil and antifreeze had occurred. The used oil and antifreeze were generated from routine maintenance on farm equipment and other vehicles.

Oily residues were present on the ground immediately beneath at least five 55-gallon drums containing used oil and antifreeze. The drums had been tipped on their sides with fill spouts open, allowing their contents to spill onto the ground. Additionally, a large area of oil-stained soil surrounded a 1,000-gallon storage tank on the property. The tank was also stored with its open fill spout close to the ground, allowing oil to spill onto the ground.

Oregon law requires that spills of oil and hazardous materials be cleaned up immediately, before the contamination spreads. At the time of the inspection, Mr. Keeton had made no effort to clean up these spills or releases. Subsequent to the inspection, DEQ learned that Keeton hired an environmental consulting firm to clean up contamination from the spills.

Failure to immediately clean up oil spills is a serious violation of environmental law. Used oil can contain cancer-causing agents, metal contaminants and organic compounds that may filter into the groundwater supply. Such contamination can result in serious hazards to human health.

Oregon rules give Keeton 20 days to appeal the penalty.