



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor

Mike D. McDaniel
Secretary

For Immediate Release
Feb. 18, 2005

Contact: Rodney Mallett
Telephone: 225.219.3964

DEQ makes arrest on charges of public bribery

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's Criminal Investigation Unit arrested Charlie "Chuck" Rick Jr. on charges of public bribery in Amite on Friday.

Rick is accused of offering a DEQ inspector \$200 after a follow-up inspection on Dec. 29 turned up possible noncompliance problems at Rick's place of business – Cypress Sawmill. During an initial, routine inspection of Cypress Sawmill, DEQ found the facility was out of compliance with some solid waste disposal regulations, mainly concerning open burning.

When DEQ officials went back to Cypress Sawmill, inspectors found that Rick had made improvements to the facility. However, he was told there were still compliance problems that could result in an enforcement action and possible fines. When Rich was informed of this he offered the bribe, according to the DEQ investigation.

"We want to send a clear message that this kind of behavior will not be tolerated," said Harold Leggett, DEQ's assistant secretary for the Office of Environmental Compliance. "The inspector reported the incident and criminal investigators confronted Mr. Rick about what occurred. At that time, he admitted he offered the money."

Public bribery is a felony, said Peter Ricca, DEQ's environmental manager for criminal investigations. "The crime is punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine or imprisonment at hard labor for five years, or both," he said. "This is a serious crime and DEQ will pursue any allegations for wrongdoing."