

California Department of Fish and Game News Release

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Fuel Dumped on Highway During Reality TV Show Results in Convictions

A Plumas County court recently sentenced two people for illegally dumping waste fuel on a northern California highway.

The crimes occurred during production of a television series called "Hell on the Highway: Highway Heroes."

A co-star of the show, William Earnest Slade III, of Stockton, pleaded guilty to one felony and one misdemeanor pollution charge and was sentenced on Nov. 2 to 45 days in Plumas County jail. He was also ordered to pay more than \$1,700 in fines and \$4,600 in restitution. In addition, he will be on probation for three years.

Elizabeth Cannon-Lynch, of Verdi, Nev., pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor charge and was ordered to serve 100 hours of community service and pay more than \$1,900 in fines and \$4,600 in restitution. She will also be on probation for three years.

Cannon-Lynch was the owner of a towing company where Slade was employed at the time of the offenses.

On Feb. 7, 2012, Cannon-Lynch received a call regarding a truck in Portola needing assistance after the driver mixed more than 40 gallons of diesel and unleaded fuel in the tank of his railroad truck.

Slade deployed to Portola after securing an electric pump and a 30-gallon plastic trash can. Waste oil and other petroleum products are classified as hazardous material in California for the purpose of transport and disposal. Neither Cannon-Lynch nor Slade possessed the proper permits to remove, transport or dispose of the waste fuel.

Slade arrived on site with the pump and began extracting the waste while a Morningstar Entertainment crew filmed the events. Raw footage collected during the investigation showed Slade acknowledging that one spark from his un-insulated pump could cause an explosion.

The footage showed the garbage can leaked and could hold only a portion of the fuel to be removed. Slade is seen on the footage leaving and returning with another trash can. The footage then cuts to Slade leaving the scene with the two garbage cans, one stacked within another, and fuel spreading out from his work area at the pump, over two lanes of State Route 70, and into a storm drain leading to the nearby Feather River.

Shortly after Slade and the Morningstar film crew left the scene, a firefighter traveling State Route 70 in the same area noticed the strong fuel odor. He investigated and found fuel all over the highway.

“The defendants in this case displayed a shocking disregard for the environment, for the safety of members of our community traveling Highway 70, of the law, and common sense, all in the name of greed,” said Matthew Carr, Deputy District Attorney with the California District Attorney’s Association.

Carr serves on the Circuit Prosecutor Project created to lend rural counties prosecutors experienced with the complexities often associated with environmental crime prosecution. They serve under the supervision of county district attorneys.

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