

Illegal Dumping/Environmental Justice: U.S. Department of Justice and City of Houston, Texas, Enter into Settlement



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The United States Department of Justice (“DOJ”) issued a June 6th news release stating that it had entered into a Settlement Agreement with the City of Houston, Texas, in response to illegal dumping in Black and Latino neighborhoods.

DOJ had opened on July 26th an environmental justice investigation into the City of Houston’s operations, policies, and practices related to illegal dumping.

DOJ’s Civil Rights Division was stated to be examining whether Houston responded to requests from municipal services (including illegal dumping) in a manner that discriminated against Black and Latino Houston residences and in violation of federal civil rights laws.

Title VI prohibits entities receiving federal assistance from engaging in activities that subject individuals to discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

The examination included Houston’s Enforcement and Solid Waste Management operations.

The June 6th news release states that the Settlement Agreement:

... builds upon the city’s recently announced One Clean Houston initiative, a comprehensive plan to address pervasive illegal dumping and its negative impacts on the health, safety and quality of life of Houston residents.

Further, the Settlement Agreement is stated to memorialize Houston’s cooperation with the Justice Department as it implements the new steps to combat illegal dumping and develop improved waste management services for Houston residents.

The One Clean Houston initiative is stated to focus on:

- Rapid Cleanup
- Better Enforcement
- Prevention and Education

The Settlement Agreement is stated to also establish:

- A three-year period of federal monitoring
- Daily reporting obligations
- Enhanced community outreach with impacted neighborhoods (including an engagement with residences with limited English proficiency)
- Consideration of actions to combat commercial sources of illegal dumping

- Reduced restrictions for residents seeking to use waste depositories
- Federal civil rights training program for specified civil employees

A copy of the news release can be downloaded [here](#).