



THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office
District of Oregon

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Construction and Property Management Companies and Company Owners Plead Guilty to Asbestos Violations

PORTLAND, Ore.—A construction company operating in Hood River, Oregon, and a property management company operating in The Dalles, Oregon, together with the owners, pleaded guilty Friday to violating asbestos work standards and negligent endangerment by discharging a hazardous pollutant in violation of the Clean Air Act.

The property management company Horseshoe Grove, LLC pleaded guilty to violating asbestos work practice standards, and its owner and operator, Ryan Richter, 44, of The Dalles, pleaded guilty to negligent endangerment by discharging a hazardous pollutant.

The construction and demolition company Chamness Dirt Works Inc. pleaded guilty to violating asbestos work practice standards, and its owner and president, Ronald Chamness, 58, of Hood River, pleaded guilty to negligent endangerment by discharging a hazardous pollutant.

According to court documents, in November 2022, Horseshoe Grove purchased a property operating as a mobile home rental site with approximately thirty tenant spaces. The property also contained two dilapidated structures located near the actively rented tenant spaces. At the time of sale, Richter received an asbestos survey completed in 2021 which reported over 5,000 square feet of asbestos within the dilapidated structures. Richter also received a demolition estimate from Chamness Dirt Works to sample, test and remove asbestos containing materials but excluded the costs for asbestos abatement.

In February 2023, Richter and Horseshoe Grove hired Chamness Dirt Works to demolish the two asbestos-laden structures. On February 20, 2023, Chamness received a quote from an asbestos abatement contractor for the proper removal and disposal of asbestos containing materials. Despite knowing the structures contained asbestos, Chamness and Richter, through and with their companies, knowingly violated the Clean Air Act by demolishing the structures without hiring a certified asbestos abatement contractor or implementing the precautionary measures mandated by federal regulations for handling such materials.

On November 19, 2024, Richter, Chamness, Horseshoe Grove, and Chamness Dirt Works were charged by criminal information with negligent endangerment and violating the Clean Air Act's asbestos work practice standards.

Richter and Chamness each face a maximum sentence of one year in prison, a \$100,000 fine, and five years of supervised release. Horseshoe Grove and Chamness Dirt Works each face a

maximum sentence of five years' probation and \$500,000 fine. As part of the plea agreement, Richter and Chamness have agreed to conduct asbestos remediation on the property. They will be sentenced on April 3, 2025, before U.S. District Court Judge Marco A. Hernández.

This case was investigated by the Environmental Protection Agency and is being prosecuted by Bryan Chinwuba, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

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