



## News from: Oakland Public Works

### IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 5, 2015

## Oakland Launches Reward Program for Reporting Illegal Dumping

We Will Not Tolerate Illegal Dumping in Our Neighborhoods

**Oakland, CA** – The City of Oakland is launching a new program that will provide monetary rewards to witnesses who report illegal dumping in Oakland neighborhoods. With the **Reward for Reporting Illegal Dumping** program, witnesses who report illegal dumping can receive up to half of all penalties collected in successful enforcement actions based on the witness's reports. This sends a strong message that Oakland will not tolerate illegal dumping in our neighborhoods and along our streets. Illegal dumping costs the City \$5.5 million a year.

Media Contact:

Kristine Shaff  
Public Information Officer  
(510) 238-2966  
[kshaff@oaklandnet.com](mailto:kshaff@oaklandnet.com)

The initiative is an inter-departmental project including Oakland Public Works, the City Administrator's Office and the Office of the City Attorney. In 2014, Oakland City Council approved an ordinance to allow City funds collected from illegal dumping fines to be used as rewards to those people who are willing to be witnesses when illegal dumpers are prosecuted.

"Illegal dumping is not a victimless crime," states Mayor Libby Schaaf. "Illegal dumping detracts from the beauty of our City and negatively impacts the quality of life for residents whose neighborhoods are being turned into nasty dumping grounds. Coming forward to safely report illegal dumping allows residents who care about Oakland to work with City agencies to stop this criminal behavior so our limited resources can be used to enhance our great City and make it more livable for all residents."

Some of the many dreadful impacts of illegal dumping include:

- Illegal dumping creates an environment of blight and lawlessness that can lead to more serious crime and violence.
- When illegal dumping is present, it tends to attract additional dumping.
- Illegal dumping can diminish a neighborhood's attractiveness and damage business and traffic.
- Property values decline over time in areas that experience illegal activity.
- Public access can be dangerous when walkways and streets are obstructed.
- Illegal dumping presents serious consequences to our environment as it can contaminate waterways and create fire hazards.
- Providing service to clean up illegal dumping sites diverts substantial, limited resources that could be used in other ways.

The Reward Program is an exciting new tool that allows citizens to help Keep Oakland Clean and Beautiful. The goal is that this unique program will lead to a

- more -

reduction in illegal dumping as the culprits realize others are watching them. When illegal dumpers are caught they can receive fines of as much as \$1,000 per day. It is intended they will quickly realize that it is best to dispose of debris in a legal manner.

The program also hopes to dispel misinformation some Oakland residents and businesses may have about illegal dumping. Some Oaklanders may have become conditioned to believe that if debris is set out it will be removed by the City at no cost. Others may believe that no one cares. Neither of these is true.

“Oaklanders have had enough of this disrespect of our beautiful City,” said Oakland City Attorney Barbara Parker. “We will not be a dumping ground. Illegal dumping is not only a source of blight in our neighborhoods, it is also has a chilling effect on our quality of life, and creates an environment that can encourage more serious crime and violence. A cleaner City is a safer City.”

Under the Oakland Municipal Code (OMC 12.04.070), it is illegal to discard items large or small on City streets. Private property owners are held responsible for removing illegally dumped materials on their property. Landlords are held accountable for items left in front or adjacent to their property by tenants, both current residents and people moving in or out of a building.

The Reward Program builds on the City’s ongoing efforts to reduce illegal dumping. Other efforts include expanding access to free bulky waste pickups, advocating for the amendment of state law to increase related penalties and revitalizing inactive areas to make them less attractive to illegal dumping violators.

**To obtain a reward**, witnesses should safely report the information they observe on illegal dumping violators to the Oakland Public Works Call Center using any one of these convenient methods:

- Phone: (510) 615-5566 (Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)
- Email: [opwcallcenter@oaklandnet.com](mailto:opwcallcenter@oaklandnet.com)
- Mobile app: [SeeClickFix](#)
- Online: [www.oaklandpw.com](http://www.oaklandpw.com) click on "Report a Problem"

Reports should include the type of debris, amount and location. The most helpful information to report is the license plate number of any vehicles involved and a description of any wrongdoers. Photographs and/or video can be especially helpful, but residents should only take photos and video if they can do so safely. The City will take care of cleaning up the illegal dumping and help witnesses apply for the Reward Program.

Once the report has been made to the Public Works Call Center, the information will be shared with the City Attorney’s Office. The City Administrator’s Nuisance Abatement Division will conduct further research, prepare witness statements and respond to all matters related to the Reward Program. After the initial reporting call to Public Works, all other inquiries about the Reward Program should be directed to the Nuisance Abatement Division at (510) 238-6370.

The following requirements must be met in order to qualify for a reward:

- Witnesses must provide their name and contact information. Anonymous illegal dumping reports may be made but will not be eligible for a reward
- Witnesses must provide a signed statement describing the incident and offer any other available evidence, such as photos or video, when contacted by the City.
- If the reported illegal dumping incident proceeds to a hearing or judicial proceeding, witnesses must appear and testify.
- The reported illegal dumping must result in a successful enforcement action, (e.g., a conviction, finding of liability or settlement).
- If enforcement action results in the City collecting any monies, witnesses may receive \$100 or half of all civil penalties collected, whichever is greater.
- If enforcement action is uncontested but the City receives no monies, witnesses may receive a nominal payment of \$10.

Public Works data shows that service requests related to illegal dumping have increased 60% in less than four years:

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Service Requests</b>
2011-12	12,281
2012-13	15,588
2013-14	17,412
2014-15	19,636 ( <i>projected</i> )

*Source: <http://data.openoakland.org>*

The City's resources are limited, and the \$5.5 million budgeted for illegal dumping this year could be used for many other services and programs. Together we can work to hold perpetrators accountable and reduce illegal dumping across our City.

More information on the Reward Program can be found on the City's website at [www.oaklandnet.com/reward](http://www.oaklandnet.com/reward).

###