Essex skip-hire boss and firm plead guilty to waste crime charges

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'I don’t do e-mails' among excuses for not clearing overflowing skips

The owner of a company hiring out rubbish skips in Essex has pleaded guilty to a range of offences over how the business was run.

Roy Brett’s yard is nestled in green fields near Braintree, but he ignored repeated warnings about the amount of skips and waste built up at the site through his company, RJ Brett Contracts Ltd, which also admitted breaking the law.

Brett wanted the Environment Agency to believe the operation was completely legitimate.

But the truth for the 66-year-old was very different. He didn’t have an environmental permit to manage the site.

After lots of excuses and denial over a 2-year period, and faced with damning evidence, Brett and RJ Brett Contracts Ltd confessed to breaches of environmental law between 2024 and 2026.

Roy Brett didn't stop bringing skips full of waste into his yard until the containers started overflowing

The Environment Agency’s case is that Brett ignored written orders and face-to-face warnings to clear the compound at Lanham Green Lane, in the village of Cressing. Brett claimed he “didn’t do e-mails,” so “missed” the written instructions to remove the waste.

Investigators found Brett stored too much wood, metal, textiles and builders’ rubbish in relation to the size of his yard. There was barely any free space, with skips overflowing with more rubbish, including mattresses and soil.

Essex Fire and Rescue Service became interested in Brett's site, too. They told him to tidy up the yard, and make sure nothing that could start a fire was brought in.

Lesley Robertson, enforcement team leader for the Environment Agency in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk, said:

> Roy Brett is a director of 3 other skip-hire companies in Essex. It doesn’t seem plausible that someone with his years of experience in the waste industry misunderstood that he didn’t need an environmental permit or what low-risk activity was allowed for exemption from needing one.
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> Brett and his company undercut rivals by avoiding permitting and subsistence fees. They also evaded permit conditions designed to protect the environment.
>
> I would urge anyone hiring a skip, or paying someone to remove waste, to check our online register to make sure the company or individual has valid permits from the Environment Agency.

Brett's yard was completely exposed to the elements. The Environment Agency told him it should be undercover.

Essex Fire and Rescue Service became interested in the site, too. They told Brett to tidy up the yard, and make sure nothing that could start a fire was brought in.

Concerns about the business were first raised with the Environment Agency in the summer of 2024, and an officer went to investigate. They found more than a dozen skips full of waste giving off a strong smell. Brett was told he had 3 months to remove all of it.

Officers were back at the site in the October as the situation hadn't improved. Brett was then sent a cease-and-desist letter, warning the site had to be cleaned up, or he'd face prosecution.

By January 2025, the deadline for the waste to be gone, almost 50 skips now filled the yard, some stacked on top of others. Officers also saw a massive pile of wood and soil.

Brett, 66, of Winstree Road, Stanway, Colchester, had been allowed to undertake low-risk waste disposal that didn't need a permit, known as exemptions, but the Environment Agency cancelled these when the scale of Brett's offending took hold.

RJ Brett Contracts Ltd was charged with 4 offences:

- operating the waste facility at Lanham Green Road in Cressing, without an environmental permit between 3 July 2024 and 31 January 2025;
- and between 1 February 2025 and 30 January 2026, both contrary to regulations 12 and 38 (1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016;
- failing to comply with a notice dated 28 November 2024, requiring the company to remove controlled waste from the site by 30 January 2025, contrary to sections 59ZB(2) and 59ZB(6) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;
- and keeping controlled waste at the site in a manner likely to cause environmental pollution or harm to human health, contrary to section 33(1)(c) contrary to Section 33(1)(c) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Roy Brett was also charged with 4 offences:

- contrary to regulations 12, 38(1)(a) and 41(1) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016, knowing of or contributing to operation of the waste facility at Lanham Green Road, in Cressing, by RJ Brett Contracts Ltd, without an environmental permit between 3 July 2024 31 January 2025;
- and between 1 February 2025 and 30 January 2026;
- contrary to section 59(5) and s157(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. knowing of or contributing to RJ Brett Contracts Ltd failing to comply with a notice dated 28 November 2024 served on the company, requiring it to remove controlled waste from the site by 30 January 2025;
- contrary to sections 33(1)(c) and 157 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, knowing of or contributing to RJ Brett Contracts Ltd keeping controlled waste in a manner likely to cause pollution to the environment or harm to human health.

Roy Brett and RJ Brett Contracts Ltd will be sentenced at Colchester magistrates' court on 15 May, when elements of the case will also be heard.

The Environment Agency urges anyone hiring a skip from people like Roy Brett, or paying someone to remove waste, to check our online register to make sure they have valid permits from the

Environment Agency.

The register anyone can search to check if a business or person has an environmental permit for any activity with the potential to cause harm to the environment can be found at: https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/index.

Contact us:

Journalists only: 0800 141 2743 or communications_se@environment-agency.gov.uk.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/essex-skip-hire-boss-and-firm-plead-guilty-to-waste-crime-charges