

# 10-point plan for handling claims of 'eco-terrorism'

## A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR ACTIVISTS

*In recent years a number of claims of 'eco-terrorism' have been made against environmentalists. In many cases they are unsubstantiated. Here are ten things to do if you are accused of 'eco-terrorism'.*

1. If your group or another group working on your campaign is accused of 'sabotage' or 'vandalism' drop everything and make it your number one priority. An effective initial response will avoid pain later.
2. Dirty tricks are designed to put you on the defensive to make you try to prove your innocence before a fast approaching media deadline. Don't be defensive – be upfront rather than hope it will go away. If you respond effectively in the first few hours the story is likely to fade and police will be left to do their investigation.
3. The best you can do is point to earlier fabricated claims of 'eco-terrorism' that have subsequently been disproved.
4. You need to quickly find out who else in your organisation is available to help work on your response.
5. Make a list of known information – times, location, what if anything is running in the media, who has commented etc.
6. *Never* claim equipment damage could have been an insurance job done by the contractor. You would probably be wrong, risk defaming an innocent victim and could

increase tensions within the local community.

7. Make contact with the police and find out what is known of the incident. Take notes and record the name and contact details of those to whom you speak. Ask whether they have issued or will be issuing a media statement. If they already have, ask for a copy.
8. Find at least two people who can record the media for you, include radio, wire services and TV.
9. Draft a brief media statement. With your press release fax the 1995 memo by Victoria Police Superintendent Robert Haldane which supports the argument about the possibility of dirty tricks.
10. Contact journalists at each media outlet that you know is running the story or is attending the site. Point them to the resource information outlining past incidents where allegations have been made and disproved.

### **Defend the Defenders**

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