# News Releases

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NOVEMBER 15, 2012 HARTFORD, CT

**ICE fines Connecticut companies hiring unlawful employees**
**Worksite enforcement strategy holds employers accountable for violations**

HARTFORD, Conn. – Following an investigation and audit of Form I-9 documents by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (http://www.ice.gov/HSI) (HSI (http://www.ice.gov/HSI) ), 12 Connecticut employers were fined a total of $132,584.25 in fiscal year (FY) 2012 for various employment violations. The inspection of the employers' documents is part of HSI's worksite enforcement strategy that launched in 2009 to reduce the demand for illegal employment and protect employment opportunities for the nation's lawful workforce. This strategy focuses agency resources on the investigation and audit of employers suspected of cultivating illegal workplaces by hiring workers who are not authorized to work.

Employers are required to complete and retain a Form I-9 for each individual they hire. This form requires employers to review and record the individual's identity and employment eligibility document(s) and determine whether the document(s) reasonably appears to be genuine and related to the individual. Additionally, an employer must ensure that the employee provides certain information regarding his or her eligibility to work, on the Form I-9.

Fines in Connecticut in FY 2012 include:

- Acranom Masonry Inc. of Middlefield was fined $4,500;
- Calabro Cheese Corp. of East Haven was fined $45,000;
- Contour Landscaping Company Inc. of Stamford was fined $8,104;
- Gourmet Heaven Inc. of New Haven was fined $5,891;
- John J. Masi Company Inc. of Bridgeport was fined $3,276;
- Kingswood Kitchens Company Inc. of Danbury was fined $12,000;
- Leed-Himmel Industries Inc. of Hamden was fined $2,241.25;
- Melissa & Doug LLC of Wilton was fined $1,386;
- Prostar Inc. of Farmington was fined $10,472;
- Quality Sales LLC of Hartford was fined $2,722;
- Superior Plastics Extrusion Company Inc., aka Impact Plastics, of Putnam was fined $34,000; and
- Villa Brava Grocery LLC of Hartford was fined $2,992.

"These settlements serve as a reminder to employers that HSI will continue to hold them accountable for hiring and maintaining a legal and compliant workforce," said Bruce M. Foucart, special agent in charge of HSI Boston. Foucart oversees HSI throughout New England. "We encourage employers to take the employment verification process seriously, as we expand the number of audits we are conducting throughout Connecticut each year. My agency will continue to focus its attention on employers that are knowingly employing illegal workers and will continue to target specific industries and businesses known or alleged to hire illegals."

During FY 2012, HSI conducted 18 inspections of employers' I-9 documents in Connecticut, an increase over the 14 inspections conducted in FY 2011, seven in FY 2010 and one in FY 2009. In FY 2011, HSI issued only one fine to a Connecticut company. PCC Technology Group of Bloomfield was fined $15,000.

HSI worksite investigations

Effective worksite enforcement plays an important role in the fight against illegal immigration. HSI has developed a comprehensive worksite enforcement strategy that promotes national security, protects critical infrastructure and targets employers who violate employment laws or engage in abuse or exploitation of workers.

An effective worksite enforcement strategy must address both employers who knowingly hire illegal workers, as well as the workers themselves. In worksite cases, HSI investigators adhere to high investigative standards, including the following:

- HSI will look for evidence of the mistreatment of workers, along with evidence of trafficking, smuggling, harboring, visa fraud, identification document fraud, money laundering and other such criminal conduct; and
- HSI will obtain indictments, criminal arrests or search warrants, or a commitment from a U.S. attorney's office to prosecute the targeted employer before arresting employees for civil immigration violations at a worksite.

HSI also works with the private sector to educate employers about their responsibilities to hire only authorized workers and how to accurately verify employment eligibility, through such tools as the IMAGE program.

IMAGE program

Undocumented workers create vulnerabilities in today's marketplace by presenting false documents to gain employment,



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completing applications for fraudulent benefits and stealing identities of legal United States workers. To combat this, ICE initiated the ICE Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers (IMAGE) program (http://www.ice.gov/IMAGE/) in 2006. As part of the IMAGE program, ICE provides employers with education and training on proper hiring procedures, including use of employment screening tools such as E-Verify. IMAGE certified employers also undergo an audit of their I-9 forms to ensure current employees are eligible to work in the United States.

Employers that are certified with ICE through the IMAGE program pledge to maintain a secure and stable workforce and curtail the employment of unauthorized workers through outreach and education. ICE recently revamped IMAGE, simplifying program requirements.

E-Verify

Through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) E-Verify employment eligibility verification program, employers can verify that newly hired employees are eligible to work in the United States. This Internet-based system is available throughout the nation and is free to employers. It provides an automated link to the Social Security Administration database and DHS immigration records.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE is a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423 or complete our tip form.



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