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Louisiana -- Agents Arrest Monroe Man for Alleged Certificate Fraud: *CENTRAL* [09/14/09]

The Louisiana Workforce Commission announced the arrest Friday of a Monroe business owner on charges of certificate fraud, as part of the agency's crackdown on employers allegedly committing workers' compensation fraud — the third arrest announced by the commission in two days for alleged fraud by an employer.

Agents with the Louisiana Insurance Task Force arrested Neal Angrum, owner of Water Works Cleaning Service in Monroe.

On Thursday, agents arrested Mauro and Keren Aguirre of Lafayette, owners of Escapade Acoustic Drywall, on charges of felony theft and workers' compensation premium fraud totaling an estimated $1.2 million in unpaid insurance premiums.

Chris Broadwater, director of the Office of Workers' Compensation, said the arrests should be a clear message that "if employers or employees are operating outside the bounds of the law, we will investigate these matters thoroughly and will seek to apply all remedies available under the law."

The task force is a joint effort of the commission, Louisiana State Police, Louisiana Department of Insurance and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office.

Angrum is accused of altering an expired certificate of insurance to make it appear that his company was covered by a workers' compensation policy in order to maintain his service contract with the State of Louisiana.

State contractors are required to have a workers' compensation policy in effect to qualify for work.

Authorities began investigating Angrum after receiving information that his company's workers' compensation coverage had been canceled on Oct. 3, 2007, due to non-payment, the commission said.

Mauro and Keren Aguirre were arrested after the task force received a tip that the couple had not accurately reported the number of employees or their company's total payroll during 2007 and 2008.

The resulting investigation revealed the company reported approximately 35 employees, with a payroll of $145,347, when it should have reported more than 300 employees and a payroll of more than $4.2 million, the commission said.

The commission has been working throughout the year to investigate suspected employer and employee fraud.

Through the second quarter of 2009, nearly 1,600 investigations were completed by the Office of Workers' Compensation Fraud and Compliance Units, with 13 cases referred to the attorney general for possible prosecution.

At least 10 arrests have been made so far this year, the commission noted.

Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission

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