




Memorandum



Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General
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To: The Honorable Daniella Levine Cava, Mayor, Miami-Dade County
The Honorable Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Chairman
and Members, Board of County Commissioners, Miami-Dade County

From: Felix Jimenez, Inspector General 

Date: August 26, 2021

Subject: Owner of The Ultimate Electrician Pleads to Criminal Charges Related to
Defrauding Workers; Ref. IG19-0007-I

The OIG criminal investigation of Jorge De La Noval, owner and operator of The Ultimate Electrician, a local contractor, ended today with a plea. Mr. De La Noval appeared before a Circuit Court Judge to answer to the criminal felony charges of Communication Fraud (3rd degree felony) and Notary Fraud (2nd degree felony). The Ultimate Electrician was hired as a construction subcontractor to perform electrical work on the project renovation of the Atrium and Tower at the Joseph Caleb Center.

On March 15, 2019, Miami-Dade County's Small Business Division (SBD) referred information to the OIG for investigation, alleging that The Ultimate Electrician was not paying its employees the Responsible Wage, as required by its contract. Once caught, Mr. De La Noval agreed to pay his employees the unpaid wages and submit a notarized affidavit attesting to such from each employee. Mr. De La Noval had each employee sign the affidavit. The OIG conducted a joint investigation with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office and found that none of the employees spoke English fluently nor understood what they were signing. Each affidavit bears a notary stamp, however, the workers stated, under oath, that no notary was present at the time of signing. Lastly, the workers provided sworn statements that they were required to deposit the back-wages checks, obtain cash in the same amount, and return the cash to their employer, The Ultimate Electrician. The joint investigation also found that Mr. De La Noval also used a double check scheme, whereby he paid his workers two checks (one in the correct amount, and one in a far lesser amount). The workers deposited both checks and returned the funds from the check with the higher amount back to their employer. This way, Mr. De La Noval had a cancelled check in the higher amount to show compliance with the Responsible Wage laws, without actually complying. By engaging in these schemes, The Ultimate Electrician underpaid its workers over \$86,000.

On today's date, Mr. De La Noval pled no contest to all charges. The Court adjudicated him guilty and sentenced him to five years of probation. Prior to plea, one worker was repaid over \$33,000 from funds retained from the prime contractor by the County. Mr. De La Noval was required to repay four workers over \$22,000, and three workers waived

their rights to over \$30,000 in back pay due to standing employment arrangements they had with their employer. While on probation, he must pay costs of investigation to the OIG and agreed not to obtain any new contracts with the County, as either a prime or subcontractor, during the period of probation.

The OIG would like to thank Miami-Dade County SBD for their assistance with the investigation.

cc: Johanna Cervone, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Edward Marquez, Chief Financial Officer, Office of the Mayor
Alex Muñoz, Director, Internal Services Department (ISD)
Gary Hartfield, Division Director, Small Business Division, ISD
Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit and Management Services Department
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