

News Release

Albuquerque, N.M., business partners with ICE IMAGE program

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – A local business partnered with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) on Friday by joining IMAGE, or ICE Mutual Agreement between Government Employers.

New Mexico Emergency Products, or NMEP, an emergency vehicle up-fitter and fleet management company, joined ICE’s agency’s employment compliance program - a voluntary partnership that helps employers maintain a lawful workforce and reduce unauthorized employment and the use of fraudulent identity documents.

By signing the agreement, NMEP becomes the eighth New Mexico business to join IMAGE.

Gabriel Padilla, operations manager for NMEP, represented the company at a signing ceremony; Jack P. Staton, special agent in charge for HSI El Paso, Texas, represented ICE. NMEP employs 12 workers in Albuquerque and is a subsidiary of Soncell North America, which has its corporate office in Santee, California.

To qualify for IMAGE certification, partners agree to conduct a self-assessment of their hiring practices to uncover vulnerabilities that could be exploited by unauthorized workers; enroll in E-verify, an employment eligibility verification program; train staff on IMAGE Best Employment Practices and the use of new screening tools; and undergo a Form I-9 audit by ICE.

“This alliance with IMAGE demonstrates NMEP’s commitment to maintaining an authorized workforce,” said Staton. “We are pleased to welcome NMEP to the program and encourage other New Mexico businesses to follow suit to reduce unauthorized employment and the use of fraudulent identity documents that can put the security of our country at risk.”

Padilla said being a certified IMAGE program member will help his company comply with immigration law.

“Our clients in the law enforcement community place their trust on our team and our services and being an IMAGE partner speaks well of our company and its resolve to maintain integrity in our hiring practices,” he said.

Undocumented workers secure jobs through fraudulent means such as presenting false documents, completing fraudulent benefit applications and stealing someone’s identity. To combat unlawful employment and reduce vulnerabilities that help illegal aliens gain such employment, ICE announced the Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers (IMAGE) program in July 2006. This program

assists employers to develop a more secure and stable workforce. It also enhances fraudulent document awareness through education and training.

IMAGE now offers a formal membership certification program that focuses on exceptional employers that have the ability to effect change within their industry or region. These employers also serve as an example and role model in the business community while highlighting the importance and viability of immigration compliance.

Undocumented workers create vulnerabilities in today's marketplace by presenting false documents to gain employment, completing applications for fraudulent benefits, and stealing identities of legal United States workers. To combat this, ICE initiated the IMAGE program in 2006.

All IMAGE members must participate in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) E-Verify employment eligibility verification program. Through this 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.

Upon enrollment in and commitment to the IMAGE Best Employment Practices, program participants are deemed "IMAGE certified," a distinction DHS and ICE believe will become an industry standard. IMAGE also provides free training to all employers on the provisions surrounding the Form I-9, fraudulent document detection, and building a solid immigration compliance model. Companies interested in more information on the IMAGE program can visit www.ICE.gov/image.

ICE

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.