News Releases

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4 local companies join ICE's effort to secure a legal workforce
Initiative aid businesses with making good hiring decisions

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico - Starbucks Coffee Puerto Rico, LLC., The Loyalty Management Group, Inc., Wisdom Resources, Inc, dba Snelling Staffing Services, and Empresas Fonalledas, joined six other businesses in Puerto Rico to become members of the IMAGE (http://www.ice.gov/image/) program with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Short for "ICE Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers (http://www.ice.gov/image/) ," IMAGE provides businesses an opportunity to partner with the agency to develop a more secure and stable workforce.

Representatives of the four companies signed Thursday the agreement of understanding with ICE, thus becoming the newest additions to the ICE IMAGE program in Puerto Rico.

(http://www.ice.gov/images/news/releases/2011/110210sanjuan_lg.jpg)

"Most employers want to comply with our nation's immigration laws. Yet, every day they are confronted with illegal aliens attempting to secure jobs through fraudulent means, including the use of counterfeit documents and stolen identities," said Roberto Escobar-Vargas, acting special agent in charge of ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Puerto Rico. "The aim of IMAGE is to help employers deal with these situations and confidently develop a legal workforce."

On April 8, 2008, in cooperation with several local businesses, ICE launched in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands the IMAGE program.

IMAGE is a joint initiative between government and the business community to restore integrity to the U.S immigration system. As part of IMAGE, ICE is partnering with companies in Puerto Rico to strengthen their hiring practices and reduce the unlawful employment of illegal aliens.

ICE is responsible for enforcing the nation's immigration and customs laws. One known vulnerability is the presence of undocumented workers who have secured jobs by fraudulent means, including presentation of false documents, completion of fraudulent benefit applications and theft of identities. To combat unlawful employment and reduce vulnerabilities that help illegal aliens gain such employment, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) introduced the IMAGE program. The goal is to assist employers in targeted sectors to develop a more secure and stable workforce and to enhance fraudulent document awareness through education and training.

By voluntarily participating in the IMAGE program, companies can reduce unauthorized employment and the use of fraudulent identity documents. As part of IMAGE, ICE will provide education and training on proper hiring procedures, fraudulent document detection, use of the E-Verify employment eligibility verification program and anti-discrimination procedures.

All IMAGE participants gain membership to DHS's 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 currently free to employers. It provides an automated link to the Social Security Administration database and DHS immigration records.

Employers seeking to participate in IMAGE must agree to:

Complete a self-assessment questionnaire;
Enroll in E-Verify;
Enroll in the Social Security Number Verification Service;
Adhere to IMAGE Best Hiring Practices;
Undergo an I-9 audit conducted by ICE; and
Review and sign an official IMAGE partnership agreement with ICE

Upon enrollment in and commitment to DHS's Best Employment Practices, program participants will be deemed "IMAGE certified," a distinction DHS believes will become an industry standard.

Other companies in Puerto Rico participating in the IMAGE program include: Puerto Rico Freight System, Pan Pepin, Vaqueria Tres Monjitas, El Conquistador Hotel & Casino, DJ Manufacturing (now Blue Waters) and Bacardi Corporation.

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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.

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