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News Releases

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2 Illinois businesses join ICE's effort to secure a legal workforce

CHICAGO - A precast concrete manufacturer and a precast concrete storm-water management system provider are the latest Illinois companies to sign an IMAGE agreement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Short for "ICE Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers," IMAGE provides businesses an opportunity to strengthen hiring practices and ensure a legal workforce.

IMAGE is a voluntary program that allows private industry to partner with ICE to reduce illegal employment and the use of fraudulent identity documents. Representatives from Utility Concrete Products LLC (UCP) and StormTrap LLC joined ICE officials in signing the IMAGE agreement during a ceremony Friday at the ICE offices in Oak Brook Terrace, Ill.



UCP and StormTrap are affiliated companies based in Morris, Ill. UCP is the leading Midwest producer of precast concrete for the communications, electrical and transportation industries. StormTrap is a leading international provider of precast concrete modular storm-water management systems.

"The goal of IMAGE is to help employers confidently develop a legal workforce and comply with our nation's immigration laws," said Gary Hartwig, special agent in charge of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Chicago. "By volunteering to partner with us on this program, businesses can enhance their corporate image with sound hiring practices."

"UCP and StormTrap are pleased to be part of the IMAGE program," stated Phillip Burkhart, an officer of both companies. "The partnership with IMAGE enables each company to achieve the highest level of available employment integrity and promotes a healthy, safe and productive work environment."

To qualify for IMAGE certification, UCP and StormTrap performed the following requirements:

- Conducted self-assessments of their hiring practices to uncover vulnerabilities that could be exploited by illegal aliens;
- Enrolled in employment eligibility verification programs, such as E-Verify and the Social Security Number Verification Service;
- Trained their staffs on IMAGE Best Practices and how to use the new screening tools; and
- Underwent a Form I-9 audit conducted by ICE.

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 U.S. 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 to all employers free training on the Form I-9, fraudulent document detection, and building a solid immigration compliance model.

Companies interested in more information on the IMAGE program can call the ICE office in Oak Brook Terrace at (630) 574-5975 or visit www.ICE.gov/image/.

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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.