

Businesses Paying the Price for Breaking Immigration Laws

The Homeland Security Department has more than doubled the number of businesses it has scoured this year for breaking immigration hiring laws, officials said Monday.

The news comes less than seven months after the deputy director of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement issued a directive that called for increased work site investigations to make sure US businesses maintain a culture of compliance.

A 2018 ICE report shows 3,510 work site investigations, 2,282 paperwork audits, 594 criminal arrests and 610 administrative arrests stemming from work site enforcement.

When you compare to numbers in 2017, it's already a significant increase.

Under a 1986 federal law, employers are required to verify the identity and employment eligibility of all individuals they hire, and to document that information using the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9.

If employers are found to hire someone without proper documents, the employers may be subject to administrative fines and, in some cases, criminal prosecution.

Derek N. Benner, acting associate director for ICE's Homeland Security Investigations division, said they're focusing on "criminal prosecution of employers who knowingly break the law," while the audits are meant as a nudge to push businesses to take hiring laws seriously.

"Employers need to understand that the integrity of their employment records is just as important to the federal

government as the integrity of their tax files and banking records,” Mr. Benner said. “All industries, regardless of size, location and type, are expected to comply with the law.”

Failure to follow the law can result in criminal and civil penalties.

In the fiscal year 2017, businesses were ordered to pay \$97.6 million in judicial forfeitures, fines, and restitution and \$7.8 million in civil fines, including one company whose financial penalties represented the largest payment ever levied in an immigration case.

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