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Immigration officials raid Houston business

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Immigration officials made a surprise visit to a northeast Houston business this morning and questioned about two dozen workers in what may be only one of several immigration raids in the city today.

A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement bus was parked in front of IFCO Systems on North McCarty Drive where several officials had gathered the workers. The company makes and repairs pallets, wooden structures used in shipping.

CE officials said the detentions are part of an ICE worksite enforcement investigation but would give no further details.

A woman stopped by to check on relatives who work at the company, including a cousin.

"He doesn't have papers. They say he'll be deported back to El Salvador," said Ana Perez, who came by with her son, Carlos. "I feel sad about this. Hopefully, he'll find another opportunity."

Her cousin, Marvin Morelos, had worked six months for the company. She had not heard anything about her other relatives.

Steve Hoard, a temporary driver for the company, had parked a company trailer by the side of the road, waiting to be let in. He said he was surprised the nationwide company would hire undocumented workers.

"When you see so many (Hispanics), you kind of figure it," he said. "I figured with the hiring process, they probably screened them."

Many of the workers take their morning coffee at a cafe next to M&M Pawn near the business, which Daniel Esquivel has run for six years.

"I say this is repression of a people," he said. "They are good workers."

Lucia Andino's husband is documented, but a boy who has been living with them and has worked for the company for 1½ years is not.

"This is an injustice, what they are doing. Imagine the conditions in which they are working here," she said, pointing to a stack of pallets next to the warehouse. "Why don't they look for real criminals? An American would never repair a pallet for 25 cents. They would rather be unemployed."