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Cassville plant pays \$450,000 fine in immigration case

News-Leader staff

A Cassville poultry-processing plant where 136 illegal alien workers were arrested in 2007 has paid a \$450,000 administrative fine.

The fine resulted from a worksite enforcement investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), according to a news release.

George's Processing, Inc., paid the fine on Monday as part of a settlement agreement.

The funds will be used by ICE to promote future law enforcement programs and activities in the area of worksite enforcement.

"Corporations, like individuals, have an obligation to follow the law," said Matt J. Whitworth, acting United States Attorney.

"This fine, in the aftermath of federal enforcement action and the prosecution of a number of former employees, sends a strong message to the business community. Immigration laws will be upheld, and violators will be prosecuted."

The settlement further directs George's to train its human resource managers and employees on how to prevent the hiring of illegal aliens, and to establish a compliance program to ensure that their hiring and employment practices are in accordance with U.S. immigration laws.

The fine paid by George's does not constitute any admission of wrongdoing by the company.

"Significant fines help hold businesses accountable to ensure a legal workforce," said John Morton, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE.

"ICE works diligently to oversee corporate responsibility, and protect jobs for this country's lawful workers."

During a May 2007 enforcement action at the George's plant in Cassville, ICE agents administratively arrested 136 illegal alien workers from Mexico and Guatemala.

Twenty-eight of those workers were criminally prosecuted for various immigration violations, including falsely claiming U.S. citizenship.

Two of the company's hiring personnel were subsequently convicted of harboring illegal aliens and inducing illegal aliens to remain in the U.S.

George's Processing, Inc. is headquartered in Springdale, Ark., and employs 4,000 workers at its three poultry processing facilities in the states of Arkansas, Missouri and Virginia.

In April, ICE implemented a new, comprehensive strategy to reduce the demand for illegal

employment and protect employment opportunities for the nation's lawful work force.

Under this strategy, ICE is focusing its resources on the auditing and investigation of employers suspected of cultivating illegal workplaces by knowingly employing illegal workers.
