



Owner of Asbestos Abatement Training School Sentenced to Prison *Posed Major Public Health Risk; Was International Fugitive for Nearly Two Years*

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BOSTON, Mass. - The former owner of the country's largest asbestos abatement training school was sentenced to prison today, after having fled the United States after her trial in November 2008. U.S. District Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton sentenced ALBANIA DELEON, 41, formerly of Andover, Mass., to 87 months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release. She was also ordered to pay \$1,200,939.45 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service and \$369,015 to AIM Mutual Insurance Company.

In November 2008, following a three-week trial, Deleon was convicted of a broad range of charges including that she sold training certificates to thousands of illegal aliens who had not taken the mandatory training course. Deleon then placed these unqualified individuals in temporary employment positions as certified asbestos abatement workers in public buildings throughout Massachusetts and New England. Deleon was also convicted of encouraging illegal aliens to reside in the United States, making false statements about matters within the jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency; procuring false payroll tax returns, and mail fraud.

From approximately 2001 to 2006, Deleon owned and operated Environmental Compliance Training (ECT), a certified asbestos training school located in Methuen. ECT normally offered training courses on a weekly basis at its Methuen offices, however, many of the recipients of the certificates never took the required course. Instead, with Deleon's knowledge and approval, ECT's office employees issued certificates of course completion to thousands of individuals who did not take the course. These individuals filed the certificates with the Massachusetts Division of Occupational Safety in order to be authorized to work in the asbestos removal industry. Many of the recipients were illegal aliens who wished to skip the four-day-long course so that they would not forego a week's pay.

Since ECT's training course records were subject to inspection, Deleon sought to cover up ECT's practice of issuing certificates to untrained applicants by having the applicants sign final examination answer sheets that already had been completed and graded, which she maintained in ECT's files. Based on the evidence at trial and information supplied by the Division of Occupational Safety, ECT issued training certificates to over 2,000 untrained individuals.

Most of the individuals were employed by Methuen Staffing, Deleon's temporary employment agency that specialized in asbestos abatement. She sent these employees to job sites throughout Massachusetts, including the Boston, Worcester, and New Bedford-Fall River areas, as well as to New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut and down the eastern seaboard.

Deleon paid most of these employees “under-the-table,” that is, without taxes withheld, and reported to the IRS and her workers compensation insurance carriers only those employees that actually had taxes withheld, saving her over a million of dollars in tax and insurance payments.

Deleon was originally scheduled to be sentenced on March 23, 2011, but three days before, she fled without warning, eventually making her way out of the United States. On October 30, 2010, law enforcement authorities in the Dominican Republic, working in conjunction with the U.S. Marshal’s Service, arrested her in the capital city of Santo Domingo, where she was living under an alias and had dyed her hair blonde. In November, she was extradited to the United States.

United States Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz said, “Today, justice was served, and Albania Deleon has finally faced the consequences of her crimes. I hope that this sentence sends a strong message to anyone who might contemplate fleeing to avoid punishment, that we do not give up on fugitives, and we will take all necessary means and resources to apprehend and prosecute them.”

“She ran and tried to hide, but eventually the law caught up with her,” said Michael E. Hubbard, Special Agent in Charge of the US Environmental Protection Agency Criminal Investigation Division in Boston. “Ms Deleon cynically defrauded the taxpayer and put her own workers and the public at risk due to her greed. Today’s sentence shows that individuals who put illegal profits ahead of the welfare of society will deservedly be prosecuted and pay a very high price.”

“This sentencing sends a clear message to employers that seek to gain an unfair business advantage over their competitors by employing illegal workers,” said Bruce M. Foucart, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston. “The potential risk to public health and safety involving asbestos and lead abatement and training licenses made this investigation and the need to bring this individual to justice even more compelling.”

U.S. Attorney Ortiz; SAC Hubbard; and SAC Foucart; William Offord, Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service’s Criminal Investigation; Scott Antolik, Special Agent in Charge of the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Investigations – Boston Field Division; James Ennis, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service; John Gibbons, United States Marshall for the District of Massachusetts; Anthony DiPaolo, Chief of Investigations for the Massachusetts Insurance Fraud Bureau; and Heather E. Rowe, Acting Commissioner of the Massachusetts Division of Occupational Safety made the announcement today.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Lori Holik, former AUSA Jonathan Mitchell of Ortiz’s Economic Crimes Unit and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter W. Kenyon, an EPA regional criminal enforcement attorney.