



Department of Justice

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MARYLAND HOME IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTOR PLEADS GUILTY TO SENDING FALSE BIDS RELATING TO FEDERALLY FUNDED REPAIR PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A president and owner of a Maryland home improvement and renovation company pleaded guilty today to sending falsified bids to homeowners participating in a primarily federally funded home improvement repair program, the Department of Justice announced.

The program, which is administered by the District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), is designed to assist disadvantaged homeowners in the District with home repair work.

A criminal case was filed on February 11, 2003, in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., against Thomas E. Keehn, Jr., the president and owner of the Highland, Maryland-based Certified Inc., for mailing a forged bid to a homeowner participating in the DHCD program.

After a homeowner qualifies for the DHCD program, an independent agency inspects the property and provides an estimate for the requested repairs. The homeowner must then obtain at least three bids to perform the repair work from D.C. licensed and bonded contractors. The homeowner submits the obtained bids to DHCD, and if they are within a reasonable range of the independent estimate, DHCD permits the homeowner to select among the contractors.

According to the plea agreement, between October, 1999 and January, 2001, Keehn won approximately eight DHCD home repair projects by sending falsified bids from other contractors

to homeowners participating in the program. Keehn has cooperated with the government's investigation, and has agreed to pay a fine of \$20,000 and to make restitution to DHCD in the amount of \$31,000. In addition, he faces possible confinement of six to 12 months.

Keehn was charged with mail fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341, which carries a maximum fine of \$250,000 and a maximum term of incarceration of five years.

The investigation was conducted by the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, and assisted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Inspector General for the District of Columbia, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General.

Anyone with information concerning anti-competitive conduct involving the Department of Housing and Community Development's home improvement programs should contact the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section at (202) 307-5784.

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