

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of New Jersey

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

Essex County Man Admits Conspiring with His Brother - a Federal Safety and Health Officer - to Extort Contractors

NEWARK, N.J. – An Essex County, New Jersey, man today admitted to conspiring to extort multiple general contractors of approximately \$14,000 by using his brother's position as a compliance safety and health officer (CSHO) with the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger announced.

Paul Idrovo, aka "Jose Diaz" and "Paul Mejia," 48, of Nutley, New Jersey, pleaded guilty by videoconference before U.S. District Judge Katharine S. Hayden to an information charging him with one count of conspiring to defraud the United States and to commit an offense against the United States, specifically to commit an act of extortion under color of his brother's office or employment with OSHA. Paul Idrovo was previously charged by complaint in September 2020, together with his brother, Alvaro Idrovo, with one count of conspiring to commit an offense against the United States based on the extortion of a single contractor.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

Alvaro Idrovo misrepresented to contractors engaged in construction sites in New Jersey that they were facing significant OSHA fines, penalties and possibly jail, if they did not get OSHA safety training from a specific individual. He would provide the contractors with the phone number for the required trainer, allegedly named "Jose Diaz" or "Paul Mejia." The phone number actually belonged to Paul Idrovo, posing under these names to conceal their relationship. Paul Idrovo was an authorized trainer for certain OSHA Outreach Training Programs, but was not an employee of OSHA.

Although initially demanding higher sums, the two men eventually charged the contractors \$4,000 to \$6,000 each for the alleged safety training, which was required to be paid in cash. Paul Idrovo collected the cash and provided the contractors with fraudulent computer-generated safety and health certificates for their individual employees, which falsely stated that the employees had received various type of OSHA certified safety training from "Jose Diaz" and "Paul Mejia," when no training had been provided. As part of the charged fee, Paul Idrovo and Alvaro Idrovo also furnished the contractors with alleged necessary safety and health plans, which were prepared from a template rather than created or modified in any substantial way for the contractor. Paul Idrovo shared with Alvaro Idrovo approximately \$5,000 of the cash collected as part of the extortion conspiracy.

When OSHA officials learned of the attempt to extort one of the contractors, the OSHA officials referred the matter to federal law enforcement, who arranged for that contractor to make consensual recordings with both Alvaro Idrovo and Paul Idrovo. During an April 2020 meeting surveilled by law enforcement, the contractor paid Paul Idrovo \$6,000 in cash in exchange for ladder and safety awareness training certificates and a safety and health plan. Alvaro Idrovo thereafter attached copies of the training certificates and the plan to his OSHA reports regarding the contractor's violation despite knowing that the training certificates falsely claimed that training had been provided to the noted individuals in March 2020, "Jose Diaz" had provided training, and the alleged training was OSHA certified.

The conspiracy charge against Paul Idrovo carries a maximum potential penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Sentencing is scheduled for May 22, 2022.

The complaint against Alvaro Idrovo remains pending and he is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

U.S. Attorney Sellinger credited special agents of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone in New York, and special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge George M. Crouch Jr. in Newark, with the investigation leading to today's guilty plea.

The government is represented by Senior Trial Counsel Leslie Faye Schwartz, of the U.S. Attorney's Office's Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

Attachment(s):

[Download Idrovo.Information.pdf](#)

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

[USAO - New Jersey](#)

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