

NEWS RELEASE

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California Labor Commissioner orders Southern California Company to return over \$336,000 to janitorial workers for unpaid wages

Los Angeles – California Labor Commissioner Julie A. Su issued citations totaling \$369,253 against California Office Maintenance, Inc., based in Poway for multiple wage theft violations. The investigation resulted in assessments of \$336,103 for unpaid wages and premiums, and \$33,150 in penalties for multiple wage theft violations that affected 115 janitorial workers over a three year period.

“Employers must pay workers all of the wages they have earned,” said Christine Baker, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). “The Labor Commissioner’s office is committed to protecting workers rights, as well as the rights of law-abiding businesses.” The Labor Commissioner’s Office is a division of DIR.

The sanctions against Joe Johnson, owner and Chief Executive Officer, include minimum wage violations of \$237,665, rest period premiums of \$81,769 for denying breaks to workers and unpaid meal period premiums that totaled \$12,446. The minimum wage violations included the practice of employing a husband-wife team but only paying one of them. Additional wage fines consisted of \$2,845 in reporting time pay to employees and \$1,376 to those who worked overtime but were not paid accordingly. California Office Maintenance, Inc. was also required to pay \$33,150 in civil penalties for these violations, which occurred over a three-year period ending on March 21.

“Janitorial workers often work in buildings after they are closed to others. This makes it even more important that we enforce basic labor laws for the benefit of these hardworking men and women, and for honest businesses in the janitorial industry that should not have to compete against scofflaws,” said Labor Commissioner Su. “The practice of using workers who are off the books, or paying a married couple as if they are one person but doing the work of two, is illegal.”

The Labor Commissioner’s investigation into California Office Maintenance, Inc. began after three former employees filed wage claims. They were represented by the Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund, a watchdog agency in the janitorial industry. The enforcement investigation was launched while wage claims were pending based on the nature and scope of potential violations against the company’s workforce.

“This case in particular was successful in uncovering wage theft thanks to assistance from the Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund,” Su added.

Among its wide-ranging enforcement responsibilities, the Labor Commissioner’s office inspects workplaces for wage and hour violations, adjudicates wage claims, enforces prevailing wage rates and apprenticeship standards in public works projects, investigates retaliation complaints, issues licenses and registrations for businesses and educates the public on labor laws.

The most recent information related to California labor laws is available on DIR’s [website](#) as well as on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages. Employees with work-related questions or complaints may call the toll-free California Workers’ Information Line at (866) 924-9757 for recorded information, in English and Spanish.

For media inquiries, contact Erika Monterroza at (510) 286-1164 or Peter Melton at (510) 286-7046.

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