Connecticut Labor Department Recovers $1.6 Million In Owed Wages for Plantsville Company Employees

WETHERSFIELD, November 22, 2016 – The Connecticut Department of Labor has recovered $1.6 million in owed wages for 121 employees of a Plantsville fire protection company following an investigation that resulted from an employee complaint. The agency’s Wage and Workplace Standards Division determined that Michael Uszakiewicz, owner of K & M Fire Protection Service LLC, illegally classified his employees as vendors when providing payment for any work time exceeding 40 hours. This allowed Uszakiewicz to avoid providing legally-required overtime, and he paid significantly lower amounts for workers’ compensation, unemployment taxes, and state and federal taxes.

According to State Labor Commissioner Scott D. Jackson, following the employee complaint, the agency’s wage division conducted an audit encompassing a two-year period. It was determined that each employee was owed an average of $14,500 for the overtime hours they worked while incorrectly classified as vendors.

“While many of Connecticut’s employers play by the rules and pay their employees properly, this is one example where a company took advantage of its workers, as well as state and federal requirements,” Jackson noted. “In these cases, failure to pay the appropriate wages, taxes, and workers’ compensation hurts not only the employees, but also undercuts law abiding businesses that do follow the laws.”

“Everyone deserves to be paid for the work they do and non-payment of overtime can be treated as a criminal issue,” said Wage and Workplace Standards Director Resa Spaziani. “Under state statute, these are felony actions that could require that Mr. Uszakiewicz spend up to five years in prison. However, our focus has been to provide the employees with the wages they rightfully earned, ensure the company is paying its fair share of taxes, and make sure the workers have adequate workers’ compensation protection.”

Spaziani added that the agency encourages any individual who believes they have not been paid properly, or any company that feels a competitor has created an unfair playing field, to file a complaint with the Labor Department. Complaint forms can be downloaded from the agency’s website at www.ct.gov/dol or one can be mailed by calling 860-263-6790. Employers with questions regarding compliance with Connecticut wage laws are also encouraged to contact the agency and speak with wage staff for guidance.

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