At Least 30 Detained in ICE Identity Theft Probe

June 28, 2025 - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), through its Homeland Security Investigations team, carried out a criminal search warrant Wednesday at Buckeye Fire Equipment Company in Kings Mountain, NC, following alleged aggravated identity theft and employment of illegal aliens.

ICE agents, U.S. Marshals, FBI, DEA, ATF, Social Security Administration investigators, IRS, CBP, the North Carolina National Guard, and local law enforcement served the warrant at around 1 p.m. on June 25th. Roughly 300 employees were inside the factory when agents arrived unannounced.

Initial reports indicated that about a dozen workers were detained. ICE said that number could grow and by Thursday, ICE confirmed at least 30 individuals had been taken into custody.

Employees reported agents confiscated personal items including phones in sealed bags, patted them down, and held them for questioning. Some attempted to record the event until agents stopped them.

ICE says the raid stems from an investigation into allegations that stolen identities or fake documents were used to enable unauthorized individuals to work at the factory.

Agencies involved include HSI, ICE Enforcement & Removal Operations, U.S. Marshals, FBI, DEA, ATF, Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General, IRS Criminal Investigations, Customs and Border Protection (including Air and Marine Operations), North Carolina National Guard, Kings Mountain Police, and Gaston County Sheriffâ€™s Department.

Buckeye Fire Equipment, founded in 1968, manufactures fire extinguishers and suppression systems. A report from WBTV.com indicates that a member of the family that owns the company and former executive of the company, Bryan Bower, was sentenced in 2018 for tax evasion. But it doesnâ€™t appear that incident was related to this one, and there is currently no evidence that any of the owner-family members or company executives have been detained in this raid.

ICE continues to process detainees and review documents. Itâ€™s unclear if any criminal charges will follow.

Raids such as this are a critical means to stop identity theft. Many illegal alien workers are able to obtain work by using legitimate social security numbers and other personal information that is stolen. This can compromise victimâ€™s credit and complicate their interaction with government agencies such as the IRS.

It is worth noting that aggravated identity theft is a federal crime with penalties including prison and fines.
by Jim Malmberg
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