

U.S. cites contractors over low pay

Companies on federal jobs accused of not paying prevailing wages

By William Polk
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Ten people and five construction companies have been charged with violating a federal prevailing-wage law.

The law says wages prevailing in a region for a certain craft must be paid on federally funded construction jobs, Peter Bowie, chief assistant U.S. attorney, said yesterday at a news conference.

The defendants, the numbers of employees involved and the amounts the government said they were underpaid are:

● Herman Worley, Ralph Meredith, their Meredith-Worley Inc. of Vista and its foreman, Tom

Franklin; 86 employees underpaid a total of \$399,665 on a painting project at Camp Pendleton.

● Glenn Thomas, president, and his Thomas Electric in the 1100 block of North Marshall Avenue, El Cajon; 10 employees underpaid \$21,411 on a \$90,554 subcontract for work on the Golden Age Apartments on South 36th Street.

● Henry Rock, owner of Rainbow Constructors, which was not charged, of Hemet; eight employees underpaid \$32,855 on a \$525,584 subcontract for carpentry on the Mariner's Cove housing project at Nimitz and West Point Loma boulevards.

● Ramon Aguilar, a partner in uncharged Hacienda Landscape of Lemon Grove; 86 employees

underpaid \$137,577 on a \$763,350 prime contract on Interstate 15 landscaping in Miramar and Poway and on a \$190,943 subcontract on Interstate 8 from east of College Avenue to west of Fletcher Parkway.

● William Baker, former owner of uncharged Baker Electrician in the 5500 block of University Avenue; three employees underpaid \$18,760 on a \$99,850 subcontract on the \$1.5 million Cerro Pueblo housing project on Clairemont Drive.

● Michael Good, president, and Donald Buss, foreman, and RGR of Ramona; 29 workers underpaid \$40,021 on the \$2.6 million Montecito Village Apartments public housing project in Ramona.
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● United Constructors in the 700 block of Carlow Way, El Cajon; 18 employees underpaid \$24,940 on a \$162,000 subcontract on the Golden Age Public Housing Project.

● TWN of San Diego; 10 employees underpaid \$28,760 on a \$129,037 contract for electrical remodeling at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot.

● The principal of another company, Alan Jay Bianco of Bianco Welding in Oceanside, was indicted Friday on five counts of falsely claiming compliance with the law and 10 counts of soliciting kickbacks in exchange for jobs reinforcing ammunition magazines and constructing security installations at Camp Pendleton.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Eve D. Bermingham said the government is

seeking \$712,401 to disburse to 256 workers in the San Diego area. She said all the contractors except Bianco, who is in Illinois, have agreed to pay.

Bermingham said the charges stem from an 18-month investigation into violations between 1982 and 1984.

Bowie said the investigation was made by the Department of Labor, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Naval Investigative Service.

The investigation was triggered by complaints from defendants' competitors and by employees' reports of threats of blackballing if they complained, said Bill Landreth, an agent in the inspector general's office of the Department of Labor.

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