

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Florida Businessman Sentenced in Connection with Migrant Labor Employment Scheme, Payroll Tax Evasion, and Worker Death**

Thursday, February 20, 2025

**For Immediate Release**

Office of Public Affairs

A Florida man was sentenced yesterday to 48 months in prison and ordered to forfeit more than \$5.5 million to the United States as well as forfeit numerous real properties and cash, and to pay over \$55 million in restitution for conspiracy to commit wire fraud, conspiracy to defraud the United States and willful violation of a workplace standard that resulted in the death of his employee. Manual Domingos Pita, of Wesley Chapel, previously pleaded guilty to those charges on July 9, 2024.

According to court documents, Pita owned and operated Domingos 54 Construction, a subcontracting business for the wood framing of new construction homes. Domingos 54 was a shell construction company that Pita used to provide workers, including undocumented aliens, with construction jobs. However, Pita failed to secure the required workers compensation insurance coverage for these employees by falsifying in worker's compensation insurance applications the number of workers for which he sought coverage. In addition, Pita failed to pay any federal employment taxes on the wages that these workers earned during the course of the scheme between 2018 and 2022. As a result, Pita caused several worker's compensation insurance companies to sustain a loss of over \$22.7 million in premiums that they could have charged had they been aware of the number of workers which they had been manipulated into covering with their policies. In addition, Pita failed to pay to the IRS over \$33.7 million in federal employment taxes on those workers' wages.

Between February and July 2019, investigators with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued six citations to Domingos 54 for failure to provide fall protection to workers. Even after being cited for these violations, Pita continued to ignore OSHA requirements. In March 2020, Pita assigned a worker and three other

carpenters to install sheeting on the roof of a residential home in windy conditions without providing the required fall-protection gear or ensuring its use. As a result, one of the workers was blown off the roof and died from his injuries.

"Pita's history of OSHA violations and deception tragically led to a worker's death," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Adam Gustafson of the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division. "We are committed to upholding the rule of law by prosecuting fraud and enforcing worker safety standards."

"The defendant in this case engaged in a deliberate scheme to defraud insurance companies, the government and evade taxes, resulting in huge losses to the U.S. Treasury, and to personally enrich himself," said Acting U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida Sara C. Sweeney. "In addition, flagrant violations of OSHA safety standards put workers at unacceptable risk, ultimately resulting in the death of an employee. My office is committed to federally prosecuting and holding accountable anyone who violates these laws and regulations."

"Mr. Pita repeatedly violated the longstanding policies designed to protect the workforce which resulted in a tragic death," said Special Agent in Charge Matthew Fodor of the FBI's Tampa Field Office. "The FBI and its partners will aggressively pursue those who selfishly ignore the laws and policies in place to protect America's workforce."

"Not only does this type of scheme give an illegal advantage over honest competitors, it intends to allow the use of illegal, undocumented labor to achieve that advantage," said Special Agent in Charge Ron Loecker of IRS Criminal Investigation's Tampa Field Office. "It's a blatant form of cheating that undercuts fair competition, costs the government millions of dollars in tax revenue, and skirts our nation's immigration laws. This case reaffirms our unwavering commitment to prosecuting those who engage in fraud at the expense of workers, taxpayers, and law-abiding businesses."

The FBI, IRS Criminal Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, Florida Department of Financial Services' Bureau of Insurance Fraud-Criminal Investigations and the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jay L. Hoffer for the Middle District of Florida and Senior Trial Attorney Banumathi Rangarajan of the Environment and Natural Resources Division's Environmental Crimes Section prosecuted the case.

*Updated February 20, 2025*

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**Topic**

## **LABOR & EMPLOYMENT**

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Press Release Number: 25-178