



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

A STATE ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

### Media Release

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**From:** Corporal Wendy McGinnis  
Public Information Officer, 352-754-6830

**Re:** Unlicensed Contractor Sting Results in 9 Arrests

**Date:** January 27, 2012

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**Arrested:**

**Kaye, Ronald w/m 12-08-1978 case number 2012-0293**  
**Sergio, Marcano-Padilla w/m case number 2012-02936**  
**O'Reilly, William Thomas w/m 12-11-1969**  
**Spadola, Peter w/m 06-16-1957**  
**Marciano, Thomas Salvadore w/m 08-31-1961**  
**Mack, Todd w/m 10/02/1964**  
**Gioglio, Douglas w/m 11/07/1963**  
**Palazzo, Frank w/m 06/26/1967**  
**Belkola, Mark w/m 11/26/1958**

This week, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office Economic Crimes Detectives, together with the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, the Hernando County Building Department and the Brooksville City Building Officials, conducted an unlicensed contractor sting in the Hernando County area. The sting resulted in the apprehension of nine unlicensed contractors.

During the investigation, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office identified multiple subjects that were advertising contractor license-required services through online advertising, newspapers and other forms of advertisement circulated throughout Hernando County. The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation and the Hernando County Building Department assisted the Sheriff's Office by verifying that none of the subjects held a contractor's license.

As a precursor to the sting, the Sheriff's Office established contact with each of the suspects. During the calls, the subjects were asked to perform work that, according to Florida Statutes Ch. 489, would require a contractor's license. On January 26-27, 2012, each of the identified suspects responded to a pre-determined location in Hernando County to give an estimate for the

jobs that required a contractor's license. All nine of the suspects that came to the operation location were identified and arrested.

This recent investigation followed a November 10, 2011 sting where detectives arranged an undercover operation in an attempt to put unlicensed contractors in Hernando County out of business. November's operation yielded four arrests. Since the November sting, detectives have continued to monitor unlicensed contractors. The detectives have recognized that unlicensed contractors are still conducting business as if they were licensed contractors in Hernando County.

Unlicensed contractors cause loss of work for legitimate contractors by undercutting prices and obtaining work that would normally go to properly licensed contractors. Citizens may also be sacrificing quality of workmanship. In many cases, the unlicensed contractor will not obtain the proper permits, which often results in work that is not inspected and may even be unsafe. Many unlicensed contractors will perform subpar work which may later need to be repaired and sometimes even redone. Occasionally, deposits are collected and the unlicensed individuals then disappear with the victim's money without starting work. Unfortunately, these unlicensed contractors are sometimes never identified.

"Businesses, particularly those that are building or repair contractors, are licensed to ensure the safety of the consumer," said Sheriff Al Nienhuis. "Unlicensed contractors not only leave a citizen without recourse when the work is substandard; they can also endanger the lives of those same customers if the work is not up to code. This operation will, hopefully, send a message to both the legal and the illegal contractors that unlicensed activity will not be tolerated in Hernando County."

This criminal activity is on-going and more proactive measures are being developed to combat the number of unlicensed contractors operating in Hernando County. The Hernando County Sheriff's Office will continue to monitor unlicensed contractor activity and will continue to make arrests for individuals who conduct contract work without a license.

The Hernando County Economic Crimes Unit strongly encourages consumers to get a second estimate on all repairs and/or construction. Please visit our website at <http://www.hernandosheriff.org/Applications/Fraud/> for valuable information on how you can protect yourself from becoming a victim of a scam or fraud. Another factor to be aware of is that if anyone knowingly hires an unlicensed contractor to perform work that requires a license they can also be charged with unlicensed contracting.

Floridians can help protect the jobs of licensed professionals and the safety of consumers by notifying the Department of Business and Professional Regulation of any suspected unlicensed activity. Complaints can be emailed to [ULA@dbpr.state.fl.us](mailto:ULA@dbpr.state.fl.us) or reported by phone to 1-866-532-1400. Additionally, the most effective way to stop unlicensed activity is to only hire licensed Florida professionals.

Consumers can also verify a license of an individual or business by visiting the Department of Business and Professional Regulation's website at [www.myfloridalicense.com](http://www.myfloridalicense.com) or by calling 850.487.1395.