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Public Citizen to Government Officials: Stop Awarding Taxpayer Dollars to Unsafe Companies

Report Calls for Legislation to Ensure that Government Agencies Assess Safety Before Allowing Contracting Bids

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Throughout the United States, government agencies at the state, local, and federal level routinely award construction contracts to companies known to be unsafe, Public Citizen said in a report published today.

The report, called “Contract Killers,” highlights cases in which companies with suspect safety records go on to win government contracts around the country, often with disastrous consequences.

“Most government agencies either have no process for reviewing contractor health and safety performance or their procedures are inadequate,” said Justin Feldman, worker health and safety advocate for Public Citizen’s Congress Watch division. “We are calling on lawmakers to require consideration of safety violations and injury prevention practices before an agency awards taxpayer dollars to any construction company.”

The report cited five cases in which government agencies awarded construction contracts to companies that demonstrated alarming health and safety problems:

- Robinson Prezioso, Inc., located in California, was allowed to work on government projects for decades despite a long history of safety violations. While working on the Bay Bridge connection San Francisco with Oakland, unsafe conditions lead to deaths, injuries, and a case of lead poisoning. While working on a power plant in Colorado, inadequate precautions resulted in a fire that killed five workers.
- Workers at North Carolina’s Triangle Grading and Paving, Inc. died in a sewer after being placed in an excavation whose walls were not protected from collapse. The City of

Durham awarded the company a sewer installation contract despite being cited by OSHA more than 60 times for construction-related safety violations.

- Bontrager Excavating, located in Ohio, repeatedly exposed workers to trenching hazards, which ultimately killed a worker on a Jackson Township sewer repair project.
- Marksmen Company, located in Maryland, was awarded a second government contract, despite multiple scaffolding violations that resulted in a worker being hospitalized with serious injuries after falling 15 feet when scaffolding collapsed.
- Nicholson Drilling, located in rural Washington state, was hired by public water district to drill a well despite a record of safety violations and a recent worker fatality.

“Taxpayer dollars should not be wasted on companies that expose their employees to dangerous work conditions,” said Feldman. “When government agencies fail to properly assess construction companies for health and safety performance, the results are not only expensive, but deadly.”

To read the report, visit: <http://citizen.org/contract-killers-worker-safety-report>

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Public Citizen is a national, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit www.citizen.org.