

Bend family indicted for smuggling tobacco products

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Attorney General Announces Indictments For Illegal Smuggling, Distribution Of Untaxed Tobacco Products

Attorney General Hardy Myers on Wednesday announced the indictment of thirteen individuals for crimes related to the cross-border smuggling and illegal distribution of untaxed tobacco products to retail stores throughout the state. The indictments are the result of the collaborative efforts of Oregon's Tobacco Tax Compliance Tax Force.

The indictments allege that four family members, Gurdip Singh Sangha, Jarnail Kaur, Kulwinder Singh Sangha, and Kuldip Kaur, operating as J.K. Wholesale, engaged in a multi-year tobacco tax evasion scam for profit. These family members conducted their distribution business from their home in Estacada until December 2003, when they moved to Battle Ground, Washington but continued to deliver to stores in Oregon. They currently maintain residences in Battle Ground, Washington and Bend, Oregon.

Prosecutors allege that the operators of J.K. Wholesale made regular purchases of contraband tobacco products, sold those products to retail stores in Marion, Clackamas, Washington, Linn, Lane, Polk and Yamhill counties, and then grossly underreported the tax owed the state.

As part of this investigation, nine retail store operators have also been indicted for crimes related to knowingly purchasing and reselling contraband tobacco products. Those operators and stores they operated in 2004 include:

Bahadur Singh - Center Market, Willamina; Center Market, Dayton; Center Market, Salem (17th Street store)

Harjit Singh - Center Market, Willamina

Soni Singh - Center Market, Salem (12th Street store)

Satnam Singh - City Center Market, Dundee

Ranjit Singh & Jaswant Singh Sranna - Oregon Mini Mart, Lebanon

Dalvinder Singh - Tobacco World, Lebanon

Sukhjit Singh & Rajkiran Toor – Toors Texaco, Estacada

Six of the thirteen defendants were arraigned Tuesday at the Marion County Court Annex.

Under Oregon law, tobacco products distributors must be licensed by the Department of Revenue and pay a 65% tax on the wholesale cost of non-tax paid purchases. Retail store operators are required to purchase tax-paid tobacco products and retain the records of these sales for 5 years. Violations of law are considered felony crimes.

The Tobacco Tax Compliance Task Force (TCTF) is a collaboration between the Oregon Department of Justice, the Oregon Department Revenue and the Oregon Department of State Police. TCTF was created by the 2001 Oregon Legislature to enforce Oregon's tobacco tax laws.

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