

ICE Raids On 7-Eleven Franchise Stores Result In 21 Arrests

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On January 10, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents commenced employment audits at nearly 100 7-Eleven franchises across the U.S., signaling the biggest crackdown on suspected illegal workers since President Trump took office. The raids resulted in 21 administrative arrests. Following the raids, ICE Deputy Director Thomas Homan said in a statement: “Today’s actions send a strong message to U.S. businesses that hire and employ an illegal workforce: ICE will enforce the law, and if you are found to be breaking the law, you will be held accountable.” ICE gave no reason why 7-Eleven, famous for the Slurpee, was targeted. The notices of inspection, also known as I-9 audit notices, were served on stores in Washington, D.C., and in California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington. The franchise owners have three days to provide the agency with the immigration status of their workers. The recent raids stem from a 2013 ICE investigation that resulted in charges against nine 7-Eleven franchise owners and managers. All of those individuals have now been arrested as of November 2017, and eight out of the nine pleaded guilty and were ordered to pay more than \$2.6 million in restitution for back wages. In its own statement, 7-Eleven said it is aware of the raids and its franchisees are “independent business owners” who are “solely responsible for their employees including deciding who to hire and verifying their eligibility to work in the United States.” 7-Eleven says it has terminated the franchise agreements of franchisees convicted of violating immigration laws. President Trump ran on a campaign promise to prevent U.S. business from employing undocumented workers. ICE’s actions against 7-Eleven are a clear indicator of keeping that promise. Expect ICE to move forward with similar enforcement actions, as one top ICE official stated the 7-Eleven raids were “a harbinger of what’s to come” for employers. In the wake of ICE’s recent crackdown, employers should consider preparing for worksite enforcement actions. Barnes & Thornburg offers a comprehensive [immigration compliance program](#) to help employers prepare for and take steps to reduce the risks associated with an ICE raid or audit.

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