

Businesses feel pressure after immigration raid

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KUSA – Local businesses are feeling the pressure after Tuesday’s immigration raid to make sure their employees are providing legitimate identification.

However, some businesses say even when they follow the federal and state guidelines, the current system does not provide any guarantees.

“It’s worrisome. You could have done all the right things but yet in a compliance check they can come in and say these employees are here illegally,” said Pete Meersman, president of the Colorado Restaurant Association, which represents 4,500 restaurants.

Meersman says the raid at the Swift & Co. plants have many local businesses looking at their own practices.

Federal authorities are investigating Swift for hiring illegal immigrants believed to be involved in an identity theft ring.

“Employers try to do their best to stay in compliance with the law but even when they do that they can be out of compliance as it looks like it happened to Swift,” said Meersman.

Swift says it followed the rules and its employees received authorization to work through the federal government’s online ID check system, which is called the Basic Pilot Program.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement said Wednesday that “these illegal aliens were able to thwart the Basic Pilot Employment Eligibility Verification System.”

However, Yvan Murad with the Mountain States Employer Council says there is no guarantee employers are hiring legal employees with the current system.

“I think there is a lot of room for error based on the number of documents and lack of training that is available to employers,” said Murad.

Murad says many of the problems start with the I-9 form. It is one of three employment verification processes issued by the federal government. Employers are asked to know what 29 acceptable documents look like to make sure their employees can work legally.

“You have many employers who don't understand the documents, don't understand how to fill out the form,” said Murad.

New state legislation that is set to go into effect at the beginning of next year could cause even more confusion. It requires business owners to photocopy and keep documents not required by federal law.

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