



PRESS RELEASE

Colorado Department of Law
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THOMAS K. TIENDA TO SERVE FOUR YEARS IN PRISON FOR HIRING HOMELESS FOR ASBESTOS DEMOLITION AND CAUSING ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD

DENVER — Colorado Attorney General John Suthers announced today that a Pueblo County District Court judge sentenced Thomas K. Tienda to four years in the Department of Corrections after his demolition of a Pueblo house led to the airborne release of asbestos. A Pueblo jury convicted Tienda of eight felonies.

“Sheer greed drove Tienda to cut costs at the expense of the public and jeopardized the health of vulnerable members of our society, the homeless,” said [Colorado Attorney General John Suthers](#). “A four-year prison sentence is appropriate and proves that this type of unscrupulous behavior will not go unpunished.”

Instead of hiring properly licensed contractors to safely demolish a multi-family house, Tienda hired homeless individuals and handymen to remove asbestos-containing materials to save money. Mr. Tienda hid the fact that his building contained asbestos from all of his workers. The demolition work, which also lacked the proper permit from the City of Pueblo, resulted in the release of asbestos into the air. In addition to intentionally exposing his workers to asbestos, Tienda’s conviction also stemmed from reusing some of the asbestos-contaminated materials from the demolition as fill for potholes at his other properties.

“There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos,” said Jeff Martinez, Acting Special Agent in Charge of EPA’s criminal enforcement program in Colorado. “The defendant not only employed unsafe asbestos removal practices, he also tried to cover up his illegal actions. This sentence should send a clear message that the EPA will continue working closely with our state enforcement partners to prosecute those who violate the law and place their private gains over the public's well being.”

The Office of the Attorney General investigated the case with the assistance of the Colorado Environmental Crime Task Force, the Air Quality Unit of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and the Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigations Division. Charges were filed against Tienda and the case was prosecuted by the Attorney General and the Pueblo District Attorney.

Citizens who believe environmental crimes have taken place may file a complaint online via www.coloradoattorneygeneral.gov/environmentalcrime.

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