

U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney  
Northern District of Ohio*

# News Release

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Gregory A. White, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, today announced that the United States has reached a settlement of civil claims that the Electrolizing Company of Ohio and its former Vice President, Todd Noble, submitted false or fraudulent claims to the federal government, in violation of the False Claims Act. Under the terms of the settlement, which was reached without the United States Attorney filing a lawsuit, Electrolizing has paid the United States \$1,479,671 and Noble has paid \$10,000.

Electrolizing, an East Cleveland corporation which is a self-described "partner company" to Norman Noble, Inc., was hired as a subcontractor to perform metal plating on parts used by other government contractors to build propulsion systems for nuclear-powered U.S. Navy submarines. After a whistleblower alerted the government

to possible fraud, the United States Attorney's Office concluded that between 1997 and 1999, Electrolizing had performed some of the plating work improperly, and that it had covered this up by falsifying test results and certifications of contract compliance. By the time the other contractors learned of the faked test results, they had already installed many of the plated parts on Navy ships. To ensure that Electrolizing's plating would not flake off and cause potentially catastrophic equipment failures, the contractors had to perform an extensive technical assurance program, which ultimately cost taxpayers more than \$600,000. The technical assurance program showed that many of the parts Electrolizing plated were usable, despite Electrolizing's fraud, but five engine components worth over \$369,000 had to be scrapped.

Former Electrolizing employee Robert Buerger pleaded guilty on August 24, 2004, to a criminal charge of conspiracy to defraud the United States in connection with the scheme. Another Electrolizing employee, Gerald Atkinson, was convicted criminally on January 12, 2006, of making a false statement and major fraud against the United States. No criminal charges were filed against Electrolizing or Noble, and neither Electrolizing nor Noble has admitted any wrongdoing in connection with the government's civil claims.

The civil case was handled in the U.S. Attorney's Office by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Heyer. The investigation of Electrolizing and its employees was

conducted jointly by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the Defense Criminal  
Investigative Service.

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