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Tennessee employers shun ID database

E-Verify targets illegal workers

BY JANELL ROSS • STAFF WRITER • JANUARY 20, 2008

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When Tennessee's new law penalizing [employers](#) who knowingly hire illegal workers went into effect Jan. 1, the state gave companies a clear way to avoid the law's serious consequences: Use the E-Verify system.

Despite that incentive, the number of Tennessee employers who use the federal identity check database remains minute. Of Tennessee's 117,903 private employers, 543 have registered to use E-Verify, according to numbers released Jan. 12 by the Department of Homeland Security. That's up from 214 a year ago.

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Tennessee's trend mirrors the nation's. Some analysts attribute limited participation in the E-Verify program to everything from lack of need to worries about what [business](#) owners will have to do if they [discover](#) illegal workers and fears about mistakenly turning away eligible workers.

Tim Weiler, human resources director for AlSCO, an international linen supply and laundry service, is confounded. The company employs about 150 people in each of its Nashville and Memphis plants and uses E-Verify at all of its U.S. plants.

"We are sold on it," Weiler said. "We think it not only gives us confidence that we are hiring people who are legal, but it also is an easier process to use. We can't understand why everybody wouldn't do it."

E-Verify is a free, Internet-based program. Employers can learn more at www.uscis.gov/e-verify.

Some Tennessee companies may opt to have a contractor conduct the sorts of database searches that E-Verify provides, a growth industry, said Jessica Vaughan, a senior policy analyst with the Washington-based Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for stricter immigration policy and enforcement.

It is also conceivable that some businesses are not concerned illegal workers are applying and that others have no plans to hire, Vaughan said.

Yuri Cunza, president of the Nashville Hispanic Chamber of [Commerce](#), believes E-Verify participation is limited because it isn't mandatory.

"You could compare it to that extra jacket or sweater you carry because you think it may get cold," Cunza said. "It is a valuable, optional tool. But it has to be used with thought."

the system isn't perfect

E-Verify does have some flaws. It cannot alert an employer that a Social Security number is already in use in a faraway state, a sign of a possible stolen number. Naturalized citizens are more likely than natural-born citizens to be flagged as possibly ineligible to work. Other potential triggers include name changes after a marriage or divorce.

In 2007, the Justice Department looked into three cases of alleged discriminatory hiring practices involving immigrants in the Nashville area, said Jody Bob, an agency spokeswoman. Two were dismissed and the third was dropped.

It's that sort of litigation that is on Tennessee [business owners'](#) minds. Last week, Nashville immigration lawyer Elliott Ozment fielded questions from worried business owners and hiring managers at a seminar dealing with the new law.

"We have been advised that there is a 10 to 15 percent error rate in the database that is accessed by E-Verify users," Ozment said. "If one of our clients were to dismiss an employee due to errors in the data ... that person could then turn around and sue the employer under federal (anti-discrimination) law."

There is another reason some employers avoid the system, Vaughan said. "Some employers really don't want the answers it may give. "They've got illegal workers. ... If an employer can say they don't know, they don't have to act."

To search a database to see which employers have registered for E-Verify, the government's worker eligibility program, click on the URL below.

[e-verify database](#)

Contact Janell Ross at 726-5982 or jross@tennessean.com.

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After reading the story and some of the very good comments on the E-Verify, I would have to say that maybe it's not perfect, but it is a start to take action on the illegal aliens. Our Country is just overwhelmed with people who have no right to be in this Country, taking jobs from American citizens, raping the American taxpayer, dropping anchors all over the place that, again, are mostly paid for by the American taxpayers. Can we mention the over crowded schools of children whose parents entered this Country illegally? No one could have imagined all the problems these illegals have caused...just to give companies some cheap labor. Yes, I want my Country back. I'm tired sharing it with 20 million illegal aliens. We must get these people back to their own Country. If E-Verify will help with that, I'm all for it. GO TENNESSEE!!!!

1/20/2008 6:50:11 PM

Recommend (4)

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Buzzm1 wrote:

Help me complain to [Home Depot](#) about their policy of allowing their business properties to be used as illegal Day Laborer Centers: Home Depot Customer Care The Home Depot is dedicated to providing our customers with excellent customer service. Call 1-800-553-3191, and Press 7, Monday - Sunday: 8 a.m. - 10 p.m. ET to speak directly with a Customer Care specialist about your complaint or send them an e-mail.

http://www.homedepot.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ContentView?pn>About_Our_Stores&langId=-1&storeId=10051&catalogId=10053#FAQ Here's the email I sent,

after making my obligatory phone call: I am very tired of being swarmed by the 150-200 illegal immigrants that are gathered at the entrances to my Home Depot. It's against the law for the illegal immigrants to be in our country, let alone be employed, BY ANYONE, within our United States. Home Depot, and the EXPO Design Center, should be ashamed of themselves for encouraging the breaking of our nation's laws.

1/20/2008 6:37:19 PM

Recommend (5)

Report Abuse



Buzzm1 wrote:

The problem is very simply solved. Report 1, or 2, employers, using report illegals dotcom. It will cost \$10 but you remain anonymous and reports are sent to INS, ICE, etc. It is money well spent. And then watch, and see how long it takes, the rest of the employers of the illegals, to begin using E-verify. They just need some heavy pressure applied. reportillegals.com Join a Local Anti-Illegal Immigration Group <http://tinyurl.com/378zbn> Contact your Senators and Representatives - office staff email addresses:

<http://tinyurl.com/2r7q6e> To report illegal aliens call the DHS National Hotline 1 866 DHS 2ICE. (1-866-347-2523)

1/20/2008 6:16:17 PM

Recommend (5)

Report Abuse



Caliman wrote:

I own a California based manufacturing company employing 15 people and I have been advised by the HR department of our payroll company that we should not use e-verify. They are saying that we may risk getting sued or being accused of racism doing a employment dispute by using the service even if we enter all employees without regard to any race, gender, or other protected categories. The company is nationwide and one of the biggest payroll companies in the country and could be influencing employers in Tennessee. I can only hope that this advice was just the opinion of one person and not company policy. I plan to use e-verify for all new hires and to vet all existing employees. Here in California we see the illegal alian problem everyday and I'm no longer willing to except anyone excusses that explain away the problem. We need solid leadership not excusses.

1/20/2008 5:52:56 PM

Recommend (2)

Report Abuse



Guillermo wrote:

Put the employers of illegals in prison and you will stop the problem.

The problem is that the cost of hiring illegals isn't high enough, if you take the assets of a company and put management in prison the message will get through to them.

1/20/2008 5:36:53 PM

[Recommend \(5\)](#)

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bursprung wrote:

I think it is bull that so few companies have registered for this service! I understand that the system is not flawless but if it will keep illegals from being hired I don't understand why it isn't being used. I'll be asking MY employer why they are not registered to use it! Hope they have a good answer, too. By the way...check to see if YOUR company is registered...

1/20/2008 5:17:17 PM

[Recommend \(4\)](#)

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geratric1943 wrote:

This just gives credence that business wants to keep wages low by using illegal workers. Interestingly enough, business want people to deal fairly and legally with them but they don't want to deal fairly or legally with us.

1/20/2008 3:20:25 PM

[Recommend \(6\)](#)

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Elviz wrote:

Under state law, you have 30 days from date of hire to provide the state information so they can go after child support. WHY the hell not have the same mandated reporting for illegals?

1/20/2008 1:33:40 PM

[Recommend \(5\)](#)

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disenchantd wrote:

For the employers who claim they cannot find workers for any price, they are full of it! There are many areas of this country that the illegals have not invaded (I know this for I travel throughout this country every week) and the unemployment rate in many of these areas is low because the LEGAL workers are doing construction, restaurant, landscaping, hotel cleaning, etc.. The government and employers of this country have brainwashed the general public into thinking they cannot survive without the illegals, however the exact same jobs are being completed throughout this country WITHOUT ILLEGALS. The construction firms claim that the cost of new homes has been kept down due to the use of cheap illegal labor. Really???

I went shopping for a new home last year and I didn't see any great savings; in fact I saw several homes that were built shoddily (broken beams, crooked tile/brick, sloppy paint jobs) and severely overpriced.

1/20/2008 11:26:24 AM

[Recommend \(6\)](#)

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jmlackey wrote:

How about simply posting these companies names for the public to see. We can then boycott such companies. If the government will not put them out of business, hopefully we as citizens will be mad enough to not utilize their services, and in turn the business will fail.

1/20/2008 11:03:17 AM

[Recommend \(7\)](#)

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