



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

CONSUMER & BUSINESS AFFAIRS

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Consumer Investigative Work Assists Case Against Alleged Home Improvement Loan Scammers

LOS ANGELES – Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón announced Wednesday that three people have been charged in a 159-count complaint with identity theft, grand theft and residential burglary in a home improvement loan scam that cost lenders \$3.4 million.

The charges come following investigative work from the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA), in support of the Contractors State License Board and the District Attorney's Economic Justice and Notario Fraud Unit.

Norbertas Sinica owned and operated Eco Technology, which advertised tankless water heaters and other energy-efficient products. Selena Garcia and Kelliams S. Chavistad were employed by the company to solicit customers.

While on in-home sales calls in 2018 and 2019, the company representatives allegedly would tell customers that the energy efficiency upgrades would cost them nothing. The representatives would allegedly collect personal information from the homeowners and use it to apply for loans through the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program for Eco Technology's benefit. PACE allows property owners to finance energy improvement projects as a tax assessment on their property tax bills.

In most instances, the homeowners were not aware that an assessment had been recorded against their property until they received their tax bills, which had increased significantly. There are 32 homeowner victims cited in the complaint.

"We applaud this action and are proud of the participation our department provided alongside our partner agencies," said DCBA Director Rafael Carbajal. "We encourage every resident to report allegations of fraud schemes to the appropriate authorities."

If you or someone you know believes they were victims of this scheme, please call CSLB at (916) 255-4161.

Most of the tax levies were later discharged by the lenders, costing PACE \$1.3 million and the energy trading company Energy Efficient Equity, Inc. (E3) \$2.1 million.



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“This alleged scheme preyed on low-income homeowners, many of whom were elderly and did not speak English. They thought they were getting a deal on home improvements, but they ended up living in fear of losing their homes,” District Attorney Gascón said. “Let these charges serve as a warning to anyone thinking about scamming consumers in Los Angeles County: we will work tirelessly to stop your schemes and hold you accountable.”

Since 1975, the County of Los Angeles Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) has been the local consumer protection agency serving County consumers, tenants, homeowners, immigrants, and workers. DCBA provides a wide range of services that aim to foster a fair and dynamic marketplace and enhance the economic wellbeing of our communities. This includes investigating consumer fraud complaints, enforcing the County’s tenant and worker protections, and providing access to justice programs. More information can be found at dcbalacounty.gov or by calling (800) 593-8222.

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