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Landscaping business owner pleads guilty to sales tax theft

SEATTLE – Nov. 21, 2013 - The owner of a King County landscaping business pleaded guilty to stealing \$112,572 in sales tax she collected from customers from 2006 through 2011.

Laura Y. Villegas pleaded guilty Thursday, Nov. 21, 2013, in King County Superior Court to one charge of first-degree theft and was sentenced to 90 days of electronic home monitoring. The court also ordered Villegas to pay \$112,572 in restitution to the Washington State Department of Revenue (Revenue).

The Washington State Attorney General's office filed the felony theft charges in May against Villegas, owner of Excell Landscapes and Excell Landscape, Inc., on behalf of Revenue.

Villegas, 51, first operated Excell Landscapes as a sole proprietorship until she closed it and reopened the business as Excell Landscape, Inc., a corporation. The sole proprietorship filed no tax returns, and the corporation reported only about half of its total income.

An audit determined at least \$112,572 in retail sales tax was collected and not remitted to the state.

Further inquiry found that Villegas operated Kalos Landscaping from 2001 until 2006, when Revenue revoked its license for nonpayment of taxes.

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About Revenue

In fiscal year 2013, Revenue collected \$18.5 billion dollars from nearly 60 different taxes. These revenues support the state's essential public services, including education, social services, health care, corrections, and natural resources conservation.

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