



**BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS, LAND SURVEYORS,
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NEWS RELEASE

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Southern California Men Face Felony Charges In Huge Engineering Fraud Case

Case reinforces importance of using licensed professionals and verifying credentials

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Two men were charged with 487 felony counts including identity theft, grand theft and forgery after allegedly preparing fraudulent engineering documents using the name and logo of their former employer, Palo Verdes Engineering, a legitimate Rolling Hills Estates-based company, in one of the largest fraud cases in recent times, according to the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) launched an investigation against Ruben Gutierrez of Huntington Beach and Wilfrido Rodriguez of Downey after being contacted by Ricky Morales, a licensed civil engineer with the company who claimed that unlicensed individuals were practicing engineering and forging his stamp. The Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, and Geologists was also notified and assisted the LASD in conducting its investigation. The board can impose administrative citations in cases of unlicensed activity.

Rodriguez and Gutierrez worked as architectural and engineering drafters, according to a 2016 LASD news release. The LASD release stated that because Rodriguez and Gutierrez are not licensed engineers, structures built based on their engineering calculations and specifications may be unsafe and not suitable for habitation. Sheriff’s department officials contacted homeowners and developers and others that may have been affected, but anyone else who received plan sets from the pair are encouraged to have them reviewed.

“The board wants to emphasize how critical it is to double-check the identities and qualifications of licensees they hire,” said board Executive Officer Ric Moore. “Consumers need to make sure the people they’re dealing with are who they say they are, and are qualified and legally allowed to do the job they’re doing. Simply asking to see a board-issued pocket ID card and government-issued ID, then verifying the name and license number on the board’s website is the first place to start.”

The board encourages consumers who believe they have received unprofessional services from an engineer, land surveyor, geologist or unlicensed person to file a complaint with the board. Its video, titled, [“How to File a Complaint”](#) explains how.

The defendants have pled not guilty to all charges and are out on bond of \$100,000 each while they await trial, according to the Los Angeles County Superior Court’s website.

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The Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, and Geologists protects the public's safety and property by promoting standards for competence and integrity through licensing and regulating the board's professions.

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) promotes and protects the interests of California consumers while ensuring a competent and fair marketplace. The department also protects professionals (licensees) from unfair competition by unlicensed practitioners. Consumers can file complaints against licensees by contacting DCA at (800) 952-5210. Consumers can also file a complaint online at www.dca.ca.gov