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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, December 11, 2024
<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys>

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**NEW JERSEY CONTRACTOR PLEADS GUILTY TO
NEGLIGENT RELEASE OF ASBESTOS**

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Tyler Amon, the Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigation Division, New York ("EPA-CID"), and Jocelyn E. Strauber, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today that JOSE CORREA, a New Jersey-based contractor, pled guilty to one count of negligently causing the release of asbestos into the ambient air, thereby placing other persons in imminent danger of death and serious bodily injury, in violation of the Clean Air Act. CORREA pled guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge Robyn F. Tarnofsky. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge John P. Cronan.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "As he admitted in court today, Jose Correa decided to cut corners by failing to hire an asbestos abatement contractor to safely remove floor tiles and mastic from a supermarket in East Harlem. Correa instead had construction workers complete this dangerous work—without providing them with basic safety equipment—and put in harm's way those he had a responsibility to protect. This Office remains committed to protecting all individuals from the harms caused by environmental crimes."

EPA-CID Special Agent in Charge Tyler Amon said: "Asbestos exposure can cause cancer, lung disease, and other serious respiratory diseases. In this case, General Contractor Correa failed to hire trained and certified asbestos abatement professionals. Defendant Correa did the work 'on the cheap,' negligently putting workers and others at risk."

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said: "Abatement of asbestos poses serious safety risks to workers and to the public if handled improperly, and federal regulations governing abatement are intended to reduce those risks. Today, the general contractor responsible for an illegal abatement at a Harlem supermarket pleads guilty to a felony, showing that flouting those regulations has serious consequences. I thank the NYC Department of Environmental Protection for notifying DOI and prompting this investigation, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and the Criminal Investigation Division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for their partnership on this case."

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According to the Information that was filed today in Manhattan federal court as well as other public statements made in court:

From at least in or about November 2022 to in or about December 2022, CORREA was employed as the general contractor for a construction project at a supermarket in East Harlem, Manhattan. CORREA removed asbestos-containing floor tiles and mastic from the supermarket floor without hiring an asbestos abatement contractor to perform the work. CORREA instead used his own construction workers to remove the floor tiles and mastic and failed to provide the workers with protective gear such as masks and protective suits. CORREA's actions caused the release of asbestos material into the ambient air and placed the construction workers in imminent danger of death and serious bodily injury.

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CORREA, 66, of Englewood, New Jersey, pled guilty to one count of negligently causing the release of asbestos into the ambient air, which carries a maximum sentence of one year in prison.

The maximum potential sentence is prescribed by Congress and provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by a judge.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of the EPA-CID and DOI.

The prosecution of this case is being handled by the Office's Civil Rights Unit in the Criminal Division. Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexandra Rothman is in charge of the prosecution.

Press Release #24-375

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