



JO ANNE BERNAL
EL PASO COUNTY ATTORNEY
500 EAST SAN ANTONIO
ROOM 503, COUNTY COURTHOUSE
EL PASO, TEXAS 79901

NO. 201019

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday July 16, 2010

Visit the Press Releases Archive at:

<http://www.epcounty/CA>

Follow us on Twitter @ [EPCountyAttney](#)

For More Information Contact:

Elhiu Dominguez

Public Affairs Officer

Phone: (915) 546-2016

Cell: (915) 472-1354

FAX: (915) 546-2133

Elhiu.dominguez@epcounty.com

**UNSCRUPULOUS REMODELER RECEIVES ENHANCED
PUNISHMENT FOR ENGAGING IN DECEPTIVE PRACTICES**

El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal today announced the sentencing of an El Paso resident accused of engaging in Deceptive Business Practices.

On August 6, 2010, 31-year-old Jesus Piña pled guilty to one count of committing a Deceptive Business Practice, a crime of dishonesty punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a fine not to exceed \$4,000. However, Piña will serve 2 years in prison because the County Attorney's Office presented evidence that Piña is a habitual offender.

The County Attorney's Office requested County Court at Law #7 Judge Robert Anchondo to run Mr. Piña's sentence consecutively with another one year sentence that was imposed the same day on another Deceptive Business case.

In order to obtain the enhanced punishment, Assistant County Attorney Arne Schonberger demonstrated in court that, since 1999, Piña has accumulated 11 convictions for engaging in various felonies and misdemeanors.

It was presented to the Court that Piña would receive from victims thousands of dollars in upfront payments for construction jobs he never finished. The Court ordered restitution of \$4,800 and \$9,000 on the two cases today. Upon completion of his sentence, Mr. Piña is scheduled to be surrendered to immigration authorities for possible deportation.

El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal expressed her satisfaction on the outcome of the case.

"My office takes our responsibility of protecting El Paso consumers from unscrupulous contractors and con-artists very seriously. This case is another example of my office's

willingness to consider every available legal resource to bring justice to the victims,” Bernal said.

“If you are planning on doing renovations or improvements to your home, do your homework before hiring anyone. It is highly recommended that you first check the contractor’s references and business record with the Better Business Bureau and with our office,” Bernal added.

Homeowners can also look up on the County’s website at www.epcounty.com/records the criminal and civil case histories of prospective contractors.

“In addition to researching your contractor, it is important to lay out when monies will be paid. Consumers must be very cautious when paying money up front. Once the consumer has given money to an unscrupulous contractor, it is very difficult for us to get it back. This is why we recommend the public not pay the complete amount of the contract until after the job is finished, and the homeowner is satisfied with the quality of the work,” Bernal concluded.

The El Paso County Attorney’s Office warns consumers against paying out large down payments and only if necessary, scheduling ‘progress payments’ -periodic payments made only after designated portions of work have been satisfactory completed.

Residents who might have fallen victims of fraud or deceptive business practices are asked to contact the Criminal Section of the County Attorney's Office at 546-2050.

###