

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Sheriff's Deputies Arrest Illegal Immigrant Working at Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant

Arpaio Asks: How Safe is Palo Verde?

07/14/11

(Phoenix, AZ) Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio says his deputies have arrested an illegal immigrant working inside the Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant, the nation's largest nuclear plant and one of the most closely monitored in the country.

Cruz Loya Alvares (DOB 08-01-78) was taken into custody by Sheriff Deputies yesterday and interrogated by the Sheriff's Human Smuggling detectives.

Deputies determined that the worker is, in fact, here illegally. Cruz admitted he has been in the U.S. illegally for most of the past 15 years. He was detained and deported in 2000 but paid a coyote for re-entry into the U.S. And last month, Cruz admitted that in June 2011, Mesa Police cited him for driving with a suspended license.

According to Sheriff Arpaio, Cruz tried to gain access to the Nuclear power plant on Monday but was denied entrance because his Mexican Driver's license was expired.

He then returned on Tuesday, this time as a passenger in a contractor's vehicle. Cruz presented an Arizona Identification card and was permitted into the facility. When plant authorities more carefully examined the card some time later, officials thought it may be illegitimate and contacted the Sheriff's Office.

"To some extent," Arpaio says, "security at this nuclear power plant worked. But still, an illegal immigrant was permitted to gain access to this facility. This raises the question: how safe is Palo Verde really if an illegal alien can gain access to this nation's largest nuclear power facility? This suggests to me that sadly, like our nation's borders, our most critical public utilities/installations are perhaps not nearly as safely guarded as they need to be."

Two different people working in security at the power plant also told Sheriff's officials that drivers of contractor's vehicles can "vouch" for the passengers if no identification documents are on hand at the time of entry.

"In post 9/11 times, "vouching" for employees who contractor's know little about is not good practice for a facility as critical as a nuclear power plant," Arpaio added. END

News Release

100 West Washington, Suite 1900, Phoenix, Arizona 85003

Phone: (602) 876-1801 Fax: (602) 258-2081

Media Contact: SheriffsMediaRequests@MCSO.Maricopa.Gov