

STATIONS ARE SAFE...

Inspection Company Manager Pleads Guilty to Fraud Involving Faulty Subway Station Welds

UPDATE (Aug. 30) The manager of a company that provided welding inspection services during construction of Metro Red Line Segment 2 pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court, Tuesday, to three charges of fraud involving faulty welds at the Vermont/Santa Monica and Vermont/Beverly stations.

The U.S. Attorney intervened in a "whistleblower" lawsuit to file a six-count indictment against Long Beach-based Twining Laboratories of Southern California. The suit alleges that Twining falsified some inspectors' certifications and filed fraudulent claims for payment for work not properly performed.

According to Metro Construction Chief Charles Stark, the questionable welds were discovered by an MTA quality assurance employee during the latter part of construction at the two stations.

Subway system is safe

In a statement released Tuesday, the MTA welcomed the U.S. Attorney's intervention in the suit and emphasized that the subway system is safe. The agency noted that the Metro Red Line tunnels, themselves, are made of reinforced concrete and have no structural steel welds.

The work primarily involved the installation of the overhanging "rocks" in the Vermont/Beverly station and the arched canopy at the entrance of the Vermont/Santa Monica station. Welds on some street decking also had to be replaced.

The agency spent about \$500,000 repairing the faulty work, which was completed before the stations opened in June, 1999. All work was re-inspected and signed off by professional engineers, Stark said.

"From a personal point of view, I welcome the criminal indictments and the civil lawsuit because it should dissuade other contractors from committing the same kind of fraud and putting other structures at risk," he said.

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