

Hispanic work crew under scrutiny Missouri Highway Patrol says it got a tip that some could be in U.S. illegally.

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Body

The **Missouri Highway Patrol** is investigating whether nearly two dozen **Hispanic** men from Arkansas **working** on a construction project here are illegal immigrants, the **patrol** **said** Wednesday.

Working on a **tip**, **patrol** officers went Wednesday morning to Continental Cement in Hannibal. None of the approximately 20 workers was arrested or jailed, and all were allowed to continue **working** while **patrol** officials checked their names with the **U.S.** Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, **patrol** Lt. Nelson Elfrink **said**.

"We **got** information that there were possibly illegal immigrants **working** there," Elfrink **said**. "The contractor voluntarily allowed us to identify those people. If it comes back they're illegal, we'll turn it over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement."

The workers are with Schueck Steel of Little Rock, Ark. The company did not return a phone call seeking comment.

They are **working** in Hannibal to help build a \$150 million kiln.

Continental Cement Vice President Tom Beck **said** he was surprised at the **patrol's** actions because the construction project was monitored by federal regulators such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

"We have had routine inspections throughout the construction project, and all the documents are in order, so we're puzzled by this," Beck **said**. He declined further comment until he learned more about the event.

Elfrink did not **say** who provided the **tip** or why it was believed the workers were in the **United States illegally**. The Quincy Herald-Whig reported that the **tip** had come from a local legislator, whom it did not identify. Rep. Rachel Bringer, D-Palmyra, **said** she was not the source. Sen. Wes Shoemyer, D-Clarence, did not return a phone call seeking comment.

Late last month, Gov. Matt Blunt announced a two-pronged crackdown on illegal immigrants. Blunt, a Republican, directed the **Highway Patrol** to check the immigration status of every person the **patrol** incarcerates, and he directed the Department of Economic Development to tighten oversight of contractors that receive state tax breaks or funding.

Hispanic advocates **say** the crackdown will lead to racial profiling and could foster an atmosphere of hostility.

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