



# **NEWS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

June 21, 2006

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## **PALM BEACH INVESTIGATIVE TEAM HONORED**

**WEST PALM BEACH** — Having your roof ripped off in a hurricane is bad enough without being ripped off by the contractor who is supposed to fix it. The 13-member Palm Beach Investigative Team, Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) made sure residents in recent hurricanes didn't suffer that insult to injury. The team is being honored for its public service with a Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Award.

After the onslaught of Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne in 2004 and Wilma in 2005, the team members worked closely together not only to get the bad contractors off the street, but to help displaced farm workers and each other through a terrible time.

It is the team's job to investigate complaints of unlicensed construction activity in the area. After receiving record numbers of complaints, the team patrolled overtime house-to-house (nights and weekends in 95-degree heat through hurricane debris and bad roads) for unlicensed activity. Their investigations resulted in several high profile arrests.

"These state employees went above and beyond the call of duty to assist citizens during the trying times of the past hurricanes and save Florida taxpayers money along the way," said Dominic M. Calabro, President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch. "We all owe them our gratitude."

In addition to pursuing illegal activity, the team is responsible for complaints of inadequate, inferior workmanship. The team sought quick resolution through mediation rather than pursuing legal channels that typically can take up to two years and create costly attorney fees.

"This was a humongous savings. Mediations are much cheaper and quicker." said DBPR Deputy Secretary, Jerry Wilson. "If we didn't have mediations, I don't know how we would have done our jobs. When you mediate, it's over – we're done."

DBPR team members Ed Garcia, Mark Johnson, Thad Clark, Victor Dadario, John Delaney, Jamie Gray, Yvonne Grutka, Margarita Espinoza, Louis Plocker, Maria Collazo, David Clark, Linda Riggio, and Terrance McAullife saved the Florida taxpayer \$770,000 by using mediations instead of the normal hearing process — and, as if this were not enough, the team banded together after Hurricane Wilma to replace soaked roof insulation for a single-mom team member.



*Some of the team's members left to right: Linda Riggio, Julie Clemmons-Scarbrough, Jamie Gray, Victor Dadario, Dick Delaney, Mark Johnson*

The Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards program is a major government improvement initiative sponsored by Florida TaxWatch, The Florida Council of 100 and the State of Florida. In its 18<sup>th</sup> year, the program recognizes and rewards state employees who clearly exceed their job descriptions and performance expectations in ways that improve service delivery and save money for Florida taxpayers.

The 2006 awards competition honored 555 winners across Florida for innovations and productivity improvements worth \$340 million in cost savings, cost avoidances, and increased revenue for state government. Since 1989, more than 12,000 individuals, teams, work units, and partnerships have been honored for saving the state \$5.3 billion.

The Palm Beach Investigative Team award is one of 25 teams and individual state employees in the Palm Beach area recognized for cost savings in the course of their jobs. Other honorees include:

▶ Victor Dadario, a member of the Palm Beach Investigative Team, who is also being recognized individually for saving more than \$64,000.00 of staff salary by completing three to four times the average number of cases. His work production also markedly improved customer satisfaction by reducing process and turn-around time.

"Mr. Dadario was Investigator of the Year in 2003 and has continued to be the state's best Investigator," said DBPR Deputy Secretary, Jerry Wilson.

▶ Ed Harper, Department of Children and Families (DCF) Supervisor, who created a web-enabled application designed to allow both DCF protective investigators and community based care agency (CBC) case workers to track high risk cases. Since the CBC workers don't have access to state computer files, this application allows the staff of both agencies to enter information and track cases in a real time environment.

"This speeds-up the progress of mutual-agency child welfare cases and minimizes additional risk to children," said Deborah Fenstermaker, DCF Director of Support Services.

▶ Pankaj Doshi, food service director with the Florida Department of Health at the A. G. Holley State Hospital in Lantana, who saved his department \$64,538.00 by recognizing the power of buying generic brands.

He also managed to save another \$43,513.00 in salary dollars by auditing and distributing the workload of two vacant positions to other employees for a full 8-hour shift, bringing the combined savings to \$108,051.00.

A luncheon honoring area winners will be held 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday June 22 at the Hilton Singer Island. The complete list of winners can be viewed at [www.floridataxwatch.org](http://www.floridataxwatch.org).

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[Click Here to View the 2006 Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards magazine](#)

**MEDIA NOTE: The Awards Luncheon Ceremony honoring area winners will be held 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday June 22 at the Hilton Singer Island, 3700 North Ocean Drive, Singer Island. Presenting the awards will be Steven Zborowski, Managing Director, South Florida Agency of Prudential Financial and Clarissa Dunlap, director of the Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards.**

Florida TaxWatch is a private, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 25 year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Our mission is to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and education on government revenues, expenditures, taxation, public policies and programs and to increase the productivity and accountability of Florida Government. On the web at [www.floridataxwatch.org](http://www.floridataxwatch.org)