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Charges dismissed against physician assistant in Smurfit-Stone case

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A Monterey County judge dismissed all criminal charges Wednesday against a physician assistant at Pinnacles Urgent Care accused in the Smurfit-Stone workers' injury compensation fraud, officials said today.

County Managing District Attorney Ed Hazel said prosecutors agreed to drop the case following the civil settlement and injunctive order against Eugene Guzman.

Guzman's Salinas lawyer, Thomas Worthington, announced earlier this month that his client agreed to pay \$30,000 in civil penalties. Worthington stated that Guzman also agreed to an injunctive order.

On Oct. 31, 2007, authorities arrested Guzman, Douglas Tateoka, a superintendent at Smurfit-Stone; David Polk, a former human relations manager at Smurfit-Stone. In March, Polk and Tateoka pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges of concealing events related to on-the-job injuries and conspiring to deny injured workers their benefits. Polk also pleaded guilty to the latter charge in a separate case.

Smurfit-Stone agreed to pay \$104,293 in civil penalties and victim restitution.