

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT *of* VIRGINIA

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Virginia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, October 1, 2019

Former NNS Inspector Plead Guilty to Falsely Certifying Welds

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – A Suffolk man pleaded guilty today to making a false statement in a matter within the jurisdiction of the United States.

According to court documents, in November 2012, Joseph Powell, 29, was hired by Newport News Shipbuilding to be a Non-Destructive Test (NDT) Inspector, in Newport News. As an NDT Inspector, Powell performed weld inspections on vessels such as Virginia Class Submarines and Aircraft Carriers. Powell had extensive training on and familiarity with the proper protocol for types of weld inspections. To track and ensure quality control with inspections, NDT Inspectors certify their inspections using NNS's Electronic Record System ("ERS"). ERS falls within the jurisdiction of the United States Navy and the Department of Defense.

In June 2016, NNS received information that Powell appeared to have certified the inspection of a weld joint in ERS without conducting the requisite inspection protocol. As a result of this information, NNS initiated an inquiry/inspection. Various welds certified by Powell in ERS subsequently were investigated by NNS in June 2016, which led to the identification of additional welds that were not in acceptable condition for inspection, did not contain the required physical markings indicating an inspection had been completed, nor had residue or powder on or around the job from the inspection equipment.

Numerous NDT weld joints certified by Powell in ERS were re-inspected. The re-inspections revealed that a number of weld joints previously certified by Powell as being satisfactory were, in the opinion of the personnel who did the re-inspections, in fact, unsatisfactory, as these weld joints contained indications or defects subject to rejection, and specifically required repair by a welder. Powell agreed, for sentencing purposes, that the estimated loss to the United States attributable to his false certifications of weld inspections from in or about December 2015 through June 2016 is approximately \$43,500.

Powell pleaded guilty to false statements and faces a maximum of five years in prison when sentenced on Jan. 15, 2020. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after taking into account the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

G. Zachary Terwilliger, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, Cliff Everton, Special Agent in Charge of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) Norfolk Field Office, and Robert Craig, Special Agent in Charge for Defense Criminal Investigative Service Mid-Atlantic Field Office, made the announcement after U.S. District Judge Raymond A. Jackson accepted the plea. Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian J. Samuels is prosecuting the case.

A copy of this press release is located on the website of the [U.S. Attorney's Office](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia. Related court documents and information are located on the website of the [District Court](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 4:19-cr-40.

Component(s):

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