

# Commercial Flooring Contractor Agrees To Plead Guilty To Bid Rigging

Vortex Commercial Flooring Inc., a Chicago-area commercial flooring contractor, has been charged for its role in a long-running antitrust conspiracy to rig bids and fix prices for commercial flooring services and products sold in the United States, the Department of Justice announced.

Vortex has agreed to plead guilty and pay at least \$1.4 million in fines and restitution for its role in the conspiracy and to cooperate in the Division's ongoing investigation. This is the second corporate guilty plea in this investigation. Four flooring executives, including two from Vortex, have pleaded guilty as well.

According to a one-count superseding felony charge filed today in the U.S. District Court in Chicago, Vortex and its previously charged executives engaged in a conspiracy to suppress and eliminate competition in the commercial flooring market by agreeing with other individuals and companies to submit complementary bids so that the designated company would win the contract. Vortex participated in the conspiracy from at least as early as 2009 until at least June 2017.

"Vortex is the largest flooring corporation charged to date in the Justice Department's ongoing investigation of Chicago-area commercial flooring contractors," said Assistant Attorney General Makan Delrahim of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division. "The conduct cheated public institutions, including public schools, and the defendant has agreed to pay restitution to the victims. The Antitrust Division will continue its efforts to make whole victims of criminal conspiracies."

"Vortex ultimately cheated innocent businesses and communities out of the competitive pricing necessary to complete flooring projects," said Special Agent in Charge Emmerson Buie, Jr., FBI Chicago. "This charge exemplifies the FBI's commitment to working with its government partners to hold contractors accountable when they attempt to profit at their community's expense."

A violation of the Sherman Act carries a statutory maximum penalty of a \$100 million criminal fine for corporations. The maximum fine may be increased to twice the gain derived from the crime or twice the loss suffered by the victims of the crime, if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

The charges are the result of an ongoing federal antitrust investigation into bid rigging, price fixing, and other anticompetitive conduct in the commercial flooring industry being conducted by the Antitrust Division's Chicago Office and the FBI's Chicago Field Division. Anyone with information on bid rigging, price fixing, or other anticompetitive conduct related to the commercial flooring industry should contact the Antitrust Division's Chicago Office at 312-984-7200 or visit [www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.html](http://www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.html).