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****PRESS RELEASE****

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**CITY ATTORNEY GATHERS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND BUSINESS PARTNERS
TO COMBAT COUNTERFEITING AND PIRACY
AND HELP CONSUMERS AVOID BUYING FAKES DURING HOLIDAY SEASON**

*Charges filed against local merchants for sale of counterfeit items
\$3 million judgment in counterfeit abatement case*

LOS ANGELES – In advance of the holiday shopping season, City Attorney Mike Feuer today warned of the negative impacts of buying counterfeit goods and offered advice to consumers to help avoid purchasing counterfeit items. Feuer was joined by FBI Assistant Director in Charge Bill Lewis, Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck and representatives from the Recording Industry Association of America, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, California Fashion Institute and other anti-counterfeiting experts to discuss the ongoing efforts to combat these illegal practices.

Feuer announced that last week his office filed five criminal cases involving the sale or manufacture of counterfeit merchandise in the City, obtaining two guilty pleas, and recently won a \$3 million judgment in an abatement case against a notorious counterfeiter.

"Counterfeit goods victimize the consumer and legitimate businesses as well as costing jobs and endangering public safety," said City Attorney Mike Feuer. "There is a simple message for shoppers, if it's too good to be true it probably is."

"Intellectual property theft causes losses in the billions and can adversely affect the economy, our health and our security," said Bill Lewis, the Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office. "Saving a little money now can have costly results down the road. As we approach the holidays, it's a good time for the FBI and our partners to remind consumers of the dangerous consequences associated with the counterfeiting industry so that we limit the demand for illegal products through education."

"Buying counterfeit merchandise not only gets you an inferior product but also funds organized crime and possibly terrorism," said Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck.

Counterfeiting costs the U.S. economy \$250 billion in lost revenue and 750,000 jobs every year, and in the Los Angeles region alone costs several billion dollars annually.

"Counterfeiters have become extremely sophisticated manufacturers of goods and often it is quite difficult to recognize a fake," said Feuer. "We have created five easy to remember clues for consumers to help determine what is the real deal."

CLUES FOR SHOPPERS TO AVOID BUYING COUNTERFEIT GOODS

1) PRICE: IF IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS

Use your common sense, if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is.

2) LOCATION

When buying in person, buy your goods at a reputable retailer. Legitimate sellers display their goods out in the open and don't hide them in the back of the store or at another location. For example, don't buy goods from someone showing items on their cell phones and then offering to bring the goods to you. Counterfeit sellers in Los Angeles often sell from the back of a car or a hidden storage location and typically sell goods on a cash only basis, with no receipts and no return policy.

3) PACKAGING

Be a smart consumer. Know how your items are typically packaged. If the packaging is shoddy, atypical for that item, or has spelling mistakes, it might be counterfeit.

4) BE AN INFORMED ONLINE CONSUMER

Consumers must be vigilant when purchasing goods online as well. Many legitimate retailers have information about how to spot counterfeits on their website.

5) LOOK FOR A SAFETY CERTIFICATION LABEL

Just about any electrical product will have one or more safety certifications on its label if it's made by a legitimate manufacturer. The UL (Underwriters Laboratory) label is the most common, particularly in the U.S. (the competing ETL mark is also a major certification in the U.S.). In Europe, the CE marking is required on electrical products, and in Canada the CSA (Canadian Standards Association) mark is common. Look for at least one of these marks on electrical products--there are often several, as well as other minor certifications. Bear in mind, however, that counterfeiters will often include fake marks on their products, so you need to look at them closely.

The City Attorney's Office recent anti-counterfeiting and anti-piracy work includes the following cases:

- The City Attorney's Office obtained a \$3 million judgment in a counterfeit abatement lawsuit against a notorious counterfeiter Oscar Bolanos Mejia, 28. The City Attorney's Office filed against Mejia for selling and/or directing others to sell a minimum of 1202 counterfeit apparel and related items from several locations in the Fashion District, including his store, Califas T-shirts. Early this month, Judge Susan-Bryant Deason ordered Mejia to pay \$3,005,000 in civil penalties and cease any business operations. A first permanent injunction of its kind was also obtained against Mejia barring him from the Garment District. Deputy City Attorney Kevin Gilligan is the Office's Counterfeit Abatement Prosecutor who is funded by a grant from the United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance.
- Cynthia Sandoval, 30, was charged with 10 counts of selling or possessing counterfeit merchandise for sale. On two separate occasions, Sandoval was allegedly caught selling multiple brands of counterfeit wallets and handbags in Santee Alley, Downtown [at 1126 S. Santee Street and at 11th & Maple Avenue], with a combined retail value of \$100,765. She now faces up to 2 years in the county jail and a \$500,000 fine. Sandoval is scheduled to be arraigned on January 24, 2014.

- Elsa Bonilla, 65, was charged with 2 counts of failure to disclose the origin of a recording or audiovisual work. She was allegedly caught selling pirated DVDs [Wilshire Boulevard & Alvarado Street] of movies currently showing in theaters with a retail value of \$951.75. She was arraigned on November 20, 2013, and pled guilty to illegal street sales. She was placed on 12 months of summary probation, ordered to serve 2 days in the county jail and to stay away from the location of the crime, and fined \$292.
- Rory Little, 57, and Jermaine Ryles, 20, were charged with 1 count of conspiracy to sell counterfeit merchandise and 1 count of selling or possessing counterfeit merchandise for sale. Undercover officers caught Little and Ryles allegedly trying to sell counterfeit Dodger T-Shirts [Cesar Chavez Boulevard & Grand Avenue] with a retail value of \$4,443.99. They now face up to 1 year in the county jail and a \$10,000 fine. They are scheduled to be arraigned on January 24, 2014.
- Oscar Mackorthy, 29, was charged with 2 counts of possession or sale of counterfeit merchandise. Undercover officers caught Mackorthy allegedly trying to sell counterfeit DVDs and CDs with a retail value of \$3,245 [San Fernando Road & Andrita Street]. He now faces up to 1 year in the county jail and a \$500,000 fine.
- Jose Sevilla-Flores, 38, was charged with 2 counts of selling or possessing counterfeit merchandise for sale. He was allegedly caught trying to sell counterfeit DVDs and CDs to an undercover officer [5309 North Figueroa Street] with a retail value of \$9,905.25. On November 21, 2013, Sevilla-Flores pled guilty and was sentenced to 24 months of summary probation, 15 days of community labor, fines and was ordered to stay away from the location of the crime.

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