

## Wal-Mart Settles Immigrant Case

*By Michael Barbaro*

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, March 18, 2005; 3:59 PM

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the nation's largest retailer, agreed to pay \$11 million to settle a federal investigation that found it used hundreds of illegal immigrants to clean its stores, government and company officials said today.

U.S. officials described the settlement's dollar figure as the largest of its kind.

In addition, 12 businesses that provided contract janitor services to Wal-Mart will pay \$4 million in fines and plead guilty to criminal immigration charges, officials said.

"This is a milestone for corporate responsibility," said Michael J. Garcia, assistant secretary for immigration and customs enforcement at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Wal-Mart admitted no wrongdoing in the case, but promised to train store managers to comply with immigration laws. The \$11 million payment to the government will be spent on federal programs to enforce immigration law.

"We acknowledge that we should have had better safeguards in place to ensure our contractors were hiring only legal workers," said Mona Williams, a Wal-Mart spokeswoman.

Since the raids, the company has ended its practice of hiring outside contractors to clean its stores. It now relies on Wal-Mart employees.

The federal inquiry began after a series of pre-dawn raids on Oct. 23, 2003, during which agents descended on 61 Wal-Mart store in 21 states. The raids included eight stores in Virginia -- in Sterling, Culpeper, Richmond, Winchester, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Lexington and Madison Heights -- and two in Maryland, in Catonsville and Mount Airy.