

Protocol developed to eliminate litigation for industry

By **CARLOS RICO**, The Daily Transcript

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In an attempt to minimize litigation **Forensic Imaging and Archiving** has started a new practice to help developers, contractors and homeowners.

"We are finding that a lot of homes during the housing boom (from the early 2000s through 2006) were finished too quickly and now homeowners are having problems with them," said Marlon Akins, vice president of marketing.

Akins gives examples of faulty wiring and heaters that were either installed wrong or installed with cheaper materials that do not last as long.

To eliminate lawsuits that might result, the San Diego-based quality assurance firm has created a new service and software "punch list protocol" that creates and archives images of work done before, during and after a construction project is complete.

Forensic Imaging and Archiving -- which offers expertise in all types of vertical construction including mixed-use, residential and commercial high rises -- stores all documentation in an online program and notifies all parties via e-mail.

Each photo is time and date stamped, along with other identifying data, to make each item easy to find and fix.

Each project is given a unique Web site, allowing homeowners, developers and contractors to follow every step of the project from their computer.

Akins said this program also is beneficial for contractors and developers because it protects them if a homeowner tries to make a false claim of flawed workmanship.

"The new protocol will allow the developer and general contractor to feel at ease during one of the most stressful periods of construction," Akins said. "This process ensures that all parties are accountable to each other, and fosters an attitude of teamwork because everyone can see the scoreboard online."

Forensic Imaging and Archiving charges \$300 to \$500 per unit.

Currently, Akins said the company has two clients -- a developer and a large subcontractor, but would not release their names.

Akins added that he believes more of these types of cases are going to come up because of the housing boom in the early to mid-2000s.

"So many contractors were taking on way too many jobs and trying to finish them as fast as they could, so the quality suffered," he explained. "Now you are going to see more and more claims like this. Our goal is to prevent litigation and make sure this type of stuff can be prevented."

Forensic Imaging and Archiving was founded in 2007 and also provides services to aviation, building envelope and marine industries through its patented software.

"Our process replaces the 'rush rush' mode with a system that is online and audited daily," David A. Blackburn, company president, said. "As part of the protocol, every electrical outlet is tested, every drain is snaked clear and all appliances are checked."

