



# ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

## NEWS RELEASE



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### Two Los Angeles County Men Charged in Ventura County Construction Fraud

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that two Los Angeles County men have been charged for defrauding Ventura County victims in a construction scam. Ben Nino Hunter (DOB 07/08/74), of Hidden Hills, and Moran Elkarif (DOB 12/17/81), of Los Angeles, are charged with seven felony counts of grand theft, conspiracy to defraud another's property, and diversion of construction funds. They are also charged with two misdemeanor violations for contracting without a license and accepting excessive payment. The charges include special allegations and aggravating factors, including causing an excessive loss of more than \$1.3 million, taking advantage of a position of trust, and targeting a particularly vulnerable victim.

The men are accused of scamming at least three Ventura County victims. Hunter and Elkarif, both unlicensed contractors operating under business names such as Welbilt Inc. and Archie Inc., allegedly carried out similar schemes across multiple construction jobs. In one instance, they were contracted to perform mold remediation work. After causing extensive damage to the home, they requested large additional payments but failed to complete the job. Similar conduct is alleged in two other instances.

The investigation into Hunter and Elkarif began in September 2024, when a victim reported the fraud to law enforcement. The Ventura County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigation's Consumer Fraud Unit conducted the investigation. Both men were arrested at their Los Angeles County homes on December 3, 2025, by investigators from the Ventura County District Attorney's Office and were booked into the Pre-Trial Detention Facility.

"These types of crimes not only cause financial harm and violate a victim's sense of security, but they also undermine confidence in legitimate businesses," said Chief Investigator Scott Whitney. "Our investigators work diligently to uncover these schemes and to pursue anyone that defrauds

our residents. We encourage any additional victims or witnesses to come forward by contacting Contractors State License Board Investigator Matthew Boeck at (909) 890-2240.”

The case is assigned to Senior Deputy District Attorney Edward Andrews, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney’s Office Consumer Fraud Unit.

Hunter and Elkarif made their first court appearance on December 4, 2025. The codefendants are scheduled for arraignment and risk assessment hearings on December 8, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. in courtroom 13 of the Ventura County Superior Court. They remain in custody with bail set at \$200,000.

**Case: 2024025587**

**Defendant Information:**

Ben Nino Hunter (DOB 07/08/74)  
Hidden Hills

Moran Elkarif (DOB 12/17/81)  
Los Angeles

**Charges:**

- PC 182(a)(4) – Conspiracy to defraud another of property
- (3 counts) PC 487(a) – Grand theft
- (3 counts) PC 484b – Diversion of construction funds
- BP 7028(a) – Contracting without license
- BP 7159.5(a)(5) – Request/Accept excessive payment

**Special allegations:**

- PC 186.11(a)(2) – Excessive loss over \$500,000
- PC 12022.6(a)(3) – Excessive loss over \$1.3 million
- PC 12022.6(a)(2) – Excessive loss over \$200,000
- PC 1203.045(b) – Excessive loss over \$100,000
- CRC 4.421(a)(3) – Victim was vulnerable
- CRC 4.421(a)(4) – The defendant induced another to participate
- CRC 4.421(a)(8) – The manner in which the crime was carried out indicates planning, sophistication, or professionalism
- CRC 4.421(a)(9) – The crime involved an attempted and actual taking
- CRC 4.421(a)(11) – The defendant took advantage of a position of trust