



New NBC investigation: Is GDS* operating illegally in California?

Tom Wadsworth, CDDC
Editor, Door + Access Systems Newsmagazine

On Nov. 7, the NBC station in Los Angeles aired an investigative story that could result in criminal prosecution of GDS, along with the final expulsion of GDS from California.

**GDS goes by hundreds of names. In 2018, their primary name was Neighborhood Garage Door Services. They are also known by variations of Yes Garage Door Service, Five Star Garage Door Repair, Jimmy's Garage Doors, Patriot Garage Doors, Fox Overhead Garage Doors, Garage Door Services, Global Development Strategies, and hundreds more. "Garage Door Services of Houston" is a different company that has no connection with this GDS.*

NBC4 reported the story of Leon Swails of Laguna Niguel, Calif., who called GDS (alias Neighborhood Garage Door Services) after a spring broke on one of his three garage doors. GDS quoted him \$500-\$600 for the fix.

However, when the technician arrived on April 9 (and saw the upscale home with three custom wood garage doors), he had bad news for Swails. All three doors were failing and were dangerous, he said. He then performed a typical GDS “hardware overhaul” on all three doors.

The bill? \$3,747.76. (See itemized charges on p. 50.)

It gets much worse

Swails told us that his garage door broke again one month after the \$3,700 “repair.”

And it gets even worse. An inspection by a reputable door dealer revealed that the tech charged Swails for parts that *were never installed*. (See photo below.) It’s one thing to charge a customer \$470 for end bearing plates. But it’s likely a criminal act to *not provide them*.

The big story

But the biggest story here is this: It appears that *Neighborhood Garage Door Services was operating illegally when they did the work at Swails’ house*.

When NBC became aware of this, they flew a reporter to Dallas to talk to Jason Romaszewski (alias Jason Romo), the general manager of GDS. The reporter caught Romo outside his house and asked him if Neighborhood Garage Door Services was the same as Garage Door Services.

“I don’t have a whole lot of comment for you guys right now,” he told the reporter.



NEW END PLATE? The invoice clearly states that Swails’ three garage doors received three pairs of end bearing plates (@ \$155.99 each!). However, this plate is not new. This photo was taken on June 13 by Lance Little of Security Garage Door, only eight weeks after its alleged installation.

Home Improvement Contract		NEIGHBORHOOD GARAGE DOOR SERVICES INC
CONTRACT PRICE		
Garage Door Openers & Parts	\$2,800.80	
Garage Door Openers & Parts Discount / Coupon	\$0.00	
Service & Installation Amount	\$704.95	
Service & Installation Discount / Coupon	\$0.00	
Garage Door Opener Tear Down and Haul Off	\$0.00	
Recycling, Disposal & Fuel	\$24.95	
Military, Senior, Etc. 5% Off Parts	\$0.00	
TOTAL DISCOUNTS / COUPONS	\$0.00	
SUB TOTAL (PRE TAX)	\$3,530.70	
SALES TAX	\$217.06	
GRAND TOTAL	\$3,747.76	
Down Payment Amount Collected	\$3,747.76	
Delivery of Door / Equipment	\$0.00	
Remaining Balance Due	\$0.00	

A simple question?

Normally, if a door dealer were asked for the name of his own company, the answer would be as simple as stating his own name. However, that question was not so simple for Jason Romo.

He had two bad options. If he had said no, it would likely be a verifiable lie.

If Romo had said yes, he would’ve essentially admitted that his company is operating illegally in California. Here’s why.

How could they be “operating illegally in California”?

As we reported in the spring 2018 issue of Door + Access Systems Newsmagazine (pp. 52-54), on Dec. 8, 2017, the California Attorney General and the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) banned GDS from doing business anywhere in California for five years. The CSLB’s case against GDS included 40 pages of specific violations, describing GDS activities as “fraudulent” 12 times.

As CSLB told us, if GDS violates the ban, the state will “likely pursue criminal charges.”

That’s the apparent reason why Romo called Leon Swails in late June. As Swails told us, Romo was “willing to do whatever is necessary to make me go away.” Romo actually offered to refund the entire \$3,747 payment “plus additional money” if Swails would drop everything.

But Swails, a senior vice president with a prominent land developer and owner of 11,000 apartments, refused to buckle.

continued on page 50

continued from page 49

But is Neighborhood Garage Door Services the same as GDS?

Short answer: Absolutely.

There are many ways to prove this, and the CSLB is likely working on that. We first reported GDS's use of the "Neighborhood" name in 2015 ("The Worst Garage Door Company in the Nation," fall 2015 issue, p. 38).

That's when their long-standing corporate website at www.garagedoorservice.com changed its header from "GDS Garage Door Service Co." to "Neighborhood Garage Door Services." A simple URL check at www.archive.org verifies this.

CSLB's challenge

The likely problem for CSLB is that GDS secured a new California contractor's license in November 2016 under their Neighborhood name. So, if someone is unfamiliar with GDS, it would appear that Neighborhood has a legitimate license. CSLB must prove that the two companies (GDS and Neighborhood) are the same.

But this name-changing tactic is nothing new for GDS. They have operated under many names in California, and it's possible that once CSLB catches Neighborhood, they'll just change names again.

The scam continues

In the meantime, California residents continue to be subjected to GDS's tactics. As Leon Swails said in the NBC story, "I'm certain



STUMPED: NBC 4 caught Jason Romo of GDS at his home and asked him the name of his company. Image courtesy of NBC 4 Los Angeles.

that these guys, in my opinion, are out doing it right now to somebody else who maybe wouldn't be as aggressive about trying to get treated fairly as I've been."

How many people are being affected?

As www.garagedoorservice.com states, Neighborhood Garage Door Services is operating in six large California markets, possibly running as many as 100-150 jobs every day. Neighborhood's own file at CSLB identifies 27 people as "salespeople" (technicians) in California. If each of these 27 run five jobs per day, they are likely hitting more than 700 victims per week.

CSLB in the spotlight

In the wake of the NBC report, the spotlight is turning to CSLB and to Anita Adams, who is investigating the case. On Nov. 9, we sent

Leon's Invoice from Neighborhood Garage Door Services

3	Springs @ 309.99	929.97
3	Spring installations @ 134.99	404.97
3	Cables @ 124.99	374.97
3	Center bearings @ 69.99	209.97
3	Pairs - End bearing plates @ 155.99	467.97
6	Drums @ 92.99	557.94
2	Lube & tunes @ 149.99	299.98
2	Torsion tubes @ 129.99	259.98
1	Recycling, Disposal & Fuel	24.95
	Subtotal	\$3,530.70
	Sales Tax	\$217.06
	Grand Total	\$3,747.76

NOT VERY NEIGHBORLY: These are the actual charges on the invoice to Leon Swails.

this question to Adams: "If GDS can blatantly disregard your hard-fought order to cease business, why should any business in the state listen to anything that CSLB requires?" We received no response.

Paul Greenwood of San Diego, the attorney who successfully prosecuted Tim Patterson of GDS in 2017, told us, "I am convinced that GDS is encouraging other technicians to leave their conscience at home and look for opportunities to upsell unnecessary parts and overcharge for services poorly rendered."

He added, "I am also disappointed that other law enforcement agencies and prosecutor offices around the nation have not apparently sought to shut down these GDS tactics. Something needs to be done soon in order to prevent others from becoming victims of this predatory business."

Alex Galenes of Escondido, a homeowner who was scammed by GDS, wrote to Anita Adams after the NBC broadcast.

"As one who was victimized by these vermin, I am outraged that they are at it again in our state," he wrote. "I urge that they immediately be required to cease and desist and that the company and its principals be prosecuted with the full force of the law." ■

Note: We contacted Jason Romo twice, asking for his side of this story, but he did not respond. You can watch the NBC4 report at <https://bit.ly/2O097BI>.