

Walgreens will pay \$7.5 million to settle with California authorities after employing unlicensed pharmacist

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Updated 4:38 AM ET, Tue February 4, 2020



Walgreens has agreed to pay \$7.5 million to settle consumer protection action with California authorities.

(CNN)Walgreens has agreed to pay \$7.5 million to settle a consumer protection lawsuit brought by California authorities who said the company employed an unlicensed pharmacist for more than a decade.

Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O'Malley announced the settlement Monday.

The action is in response to a complaint filed by the district attorneys of Alameda and Santa Clara counties that alleges Kim Thien Le worked as a pharmacist in multiple Walgreens locations in the Bay Area for more than 10 years though she was not licensed by the Board of Pharmacy.

While working as a pharmacist, Le participated in filling more than 745,000 prescriptions, including more than 100,000 for controlled substances, O'Malley's

office said in a news release.

The company failed to properly check Le's credentials after she was promoted into positions requiring a license, O'Malley's office said.

"This case serves as a cautionary tale for every health care provider that hires people into positions requiring a professional license," O'Malley said in the release. "The burden is on the company to make sure its employees are properly licensed and to complete a thorough background check. My office will be vigilant in protecting consumers and enforcing licensing laws."

In addition to paying \$7.5 million in penalties, costs and remedial payments, the civil judgment requires Walgreens to implement a verification program to check licenses, post proof of licensure, conduct annual audits, and submit an annual compliance report, the news release said.

Le has not been employed with the company since October 2017 and was criminally charged last summer with false personation and related felonies by the California Attorney General's Office. She has pleaded not guilty, the release said, and the case is pending.

After being made aware of Le's lack of credentials, Walgreens immediately took steps to re-verify licensure compliance, according to the release.

CNN has reached out to Walgreens for comment but has not yet heard back.