

Publications

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DOJ Pays First \$1 Million Award Under New Antitrust Whistleblower Program

Key Takeaways

- The DOJ has issued its first award under the new USPS antitrust whistleblower program, confirming the program is active and tied to real enforcement outcomes, including a deferred prosecution agreement and multimillion-dollar fine.
- By pairing monetary awards of 15% to 30% of recoveries with existing leniency policies and USPS authority tied to use of the mail, the DOJ is accelerating what it calls a “race to report” and increasing exposure for companies.
- Organizations should reassess antitrust compliance training, monitoring and documentation practices in light of heightened enforcement risk and increased incentives for employees to report.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) recently announced their first-ever award under their new whistleblower program: \$1 million to an individual whose tip led to a deferred prosecution agreement with EBLOCK Corporation. Under the deferred prosecution agreement, EBLOCK will pay a \$3.28 million fine and must take remedial measures, including cooperating with the DOJ in ongoing criminal investigations. The scheme involved a company that EBLOCK acquired in 2020, referred to as “Company A” by the DOJ. According to the DOJ, Company A illegally coordinated with a “Company B” to rig bids for online auctions for used vehicles. The companies coordinated to place fake bids and artificially increase the price for used cars and split the profits. They used the U.S. mail to send documentation relating to the scheme, bringing it under the umbrella of the new whistleblower program.

This first award highlights the DOJ’s focus on incentivizing individual reports, raising the stakes for companies with potential antitrust exposure. Read on for key details and next steps.

Whistleblower Programs: What Companies Need to Know

The DOJ and USPS announced the whistleblower program in July 2025. The new program allows whistleblowers to report criminal antitrust violations to the DOJ and, if the DOJ prosecutes and recovers, allows a payment to the whistleblower of roughly 15% to

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30% of the recovery. The program relies on the USPS's statutory authority to award whistleblowers who report criminal antitrust violations involving use of the U.S. mail and builds on the DOJ's long-standing Corporate Leniency Policy for antitrust cases. Under this policy, individuals and corporations who self-report their participation in an antitrust cartel can receive leniency from the DOJ in the prosecution of the cartel.

The new whistleblower program is similar to one announced by the DOJ in May 2025, which focuses on corporate whistleblowers. The corporate whistleblower program covers crimes involving financial institutions, health care fraud schemes or corruption involving misconduct by companies, and it pays whistleblowers out of forfeited assets after individual victims have been compensated. There have not yet been awards made under the corporate whistleblower program, though this is not unexpected — securing a successful prosecution and forfeiture of assets from a whistleblower's initial tip can be extensive process.

DOJ Anticipates Surge in Whistleblower Reporting

The DOJ indicated that they expect this award and new incentive program to lead to increased reporting of illegal antitrust activity, particularly when combined with existing programs. Deputy Assistant Attorney General Omeed A. Assefi noted a “race to report” to receive leniency — and that the race is faster now as employees rush to “beat their companies to the Division's doorstep.”

Practical Next Steps: Reinforcing Compliance and Risk Management

These two whistleblower programs reflect the DOJ's increasing reliance on individual reports as a method of unearthing illegal activity. Together, these programs reinforce the need for organizations to prioritize sound antitrust compliance training and proactive risk management. The Polsinelli Antitrust group is available to assist clients with their compliance programs.