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HIPAA privacy and security violations cost Seattle company \$100,000

*Friday, July 18, 2008
By: Nancy Ferris*

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Govt HIT -- 07/18/2008 -- The Health and Human Services Department has settled complaints over breaches of health information privacy and security rules by a Seattle home health care company.

Health records of more than 386,000 patients were compromised, according to an HHS news release. Under the first-of-its-kind agreement, Providence Health & Services of Seattle has paid \$100,000 and promised to take steps to ensure further breaches do not happen.

The agreement labels the \$100,000 payment a "resolution amount." "Providence's cooperation with [HHS offices] allowed HHS to resolve this case without the need to impose a civil monetary penalty," the news release states.

The agreement may signal that HHS is taking a tougher stance toward violations. Winston Wilkinson, director of the HHS Office of Civil Rights, said in a statement, "We are committed to effective enforcement of health information privacy and security protections for consumers. Other covered entities that are not in compliance with the privacy and security rules may face similar action."

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