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Interior Building Modernization Improves Infrastructure and Building's Safety and Health

WASHINGTON – With an abundance of concern for the safety and health of all Department of the Interior employees and visitors, DOI contacted the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) in June 2006 to conduct a health hazard evaluation of the Modernization Project Interior Building. NIOSH completed that evaluation in August 2006 and made recommendations for improvements. DOI has worked diligently with the General Services Administration (GSA), which is the project lead on the modernization, and their contractor to implement these recommendations over the past nine months. On May 24, 2007, the Department received the NIOSH final report of findings which re-emphasized the recommendations made in August.

“The Department has been out front of the final report; having made significant progress in all areas of the recommendations,” said Nina Rose Hatfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Business Management and Wildland Fire.”

The DOI National Business Center (NBC) Modernization Project Office has been working with GSA on the 12 year, phased modernization of the Main Interior Building. The project is designed to improve the infrastructure, including heating,

“Our employees’ health and safety in the Main Interior Building continues to be a primary concern. GSA’s Industrial Hygienist Team performs daily Indoor Air Quality sampling. In addition, communication measures are in place that allow our employees direct access to information regarding the Modernization Project. These tests demonstrate that the main Interior Building is safe”

**Nina Rose Hatfield
Deputy Assistant
Secretary, Business
Management & Wildland
Fire**



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ventilation, air-conditioning (HVAC) systems, plumbing and electrical systems. The chief purpose of the project is to improve the health and safety conditions for all of the building's employees and visitors.

Some of the many changes among others in the building include:

- Creating better barriers helps keep any dust or other particulates within the construction zone. Increased barrier protection was implemented in Phase III of the modernization project (the project's current phase).
- GSA has a full-time industrial hygiene firm to provide on-site daily air sampling of both the work areas and the occupied areas adjacent to areas where work is being performed. All samples collected in the occupied areas, with the exception of one in November 2002, have yielded results below the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) permissible exposure limits.
- Increased Communications with Employees by:
 1. Frequent Tenant User Groups and IAQ Meetings to address Modernization Project concerns
 2. A redesigned Modernization Website to provide more extensive information to employees. The website at <http://www.doi.gov/modernization/> includes:
 - Modernization Newsletters
 - Tenant User Group Meeting Announcements and Minutes
 - Monthly air sampling reports
- A Federal Occupational Health Physician is retained by the DOI Modernization Project Office. She has toured the site within the last month, and also interviewed several employees who have expressed concerns.

With the continuous oversight Interior continues to ensure the safety and health of all of the occupants and visitors of the Main Interior Building. The modernization project is scheduled for completion in 2012.