

**STATEMENT OF  
NATIONAL BUSINESS CENTER'S DIRECTOR DOUG BOURGEOIS  
ON HEALTH ISSUES AND BUILDING MODERNIZATION  
May 26, 2006**

The Department of the Interior will provide a complete assessment of employee concerns by September 1, 2006 as requested by the House Appropriations Committee. In the meantime, this additional information may be useful.

The primary purpose of the Main Interior Building Modernization Project is to upgrade and improve the building's aged mechanical, electrical, plumbing and life safety infrastructure for the benefit of employees and visitors.

Because we care about our DOI employees, their health, and wellbeing, we continue to perform DAILY INDOOR AIR QUALITY MONITORING whenever construction activities are occurring. With one exception in November 2002, none of the samples collected as part of the Modernization have exceeded applicable permissible exposure limits.

SPECIFIC SAFETY MEASURES have been incorporated into the GSA contract.

- ❖ The provision of fire resistant barriers between the construction zone and occupied space.
- ❖ GSA has retained a full-time industrial hygiene firm to provide onsite daily air and bulk 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 one exception previously noted, have yielded results below the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) permissible exposure limits.
- ❖ Transport of hazardous materials through occupied areas is not allowed, except in limited areas and after hours. All transport activities must follow strict safety precautions identified in the Contract Documents.
- ❖ An Environmentally Preferable Products and Services (EPPS) Plan has been prepared by the contractor and approved by GSA.
- ❖ A Construction Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Management Plan was prepared by the contractor and approved by GSA. It includes requirements to describe means and methods for preventing migration of dust, air pollution, and odors. An example of one prevention

measure is the use of temporary ventilation systems in work zones filtered and exhausted to the outdoors.

- ❖ The Contractor's corporate Safety Officer conducts regular site inspections to ensure compliance with all applicable safety regulations. The General Contractor is required to disconnect and isolate the HVAC system for each Wing under construction. Additionally, the wing under construction is further isolated from the remainder of the facility with rigid barriers and polyethylene sheeting.

In addition, DOI has had a full time Industrial Hygienist on-site for the entire project to respond to concerns raised by building occupants and to conduct additional air quality testing, when appropriate. The Industrial Hygienist provides bi-monthly assistance during Tenant User Group (TUG) meetings and is available for employees' questions and concerns.

DOI management has utilized a variety of communication methods to ensure ongoing dialog between the Modernization program and DOI employees. Several forms of communication include:

- ❖ An all employees meeting was held to address the scope and purpose of the Modernization when the project began in 2002.
- ❖ Since the program's inception, the DOI Modernization Program Office (MPO) has provided an updated project status briefing at every Tenant User Group bi-monthly meeting. These briefings always conclude with a question and answer period.
- ❖ The DOI MPO periodically prepares articles on the Modernization activities for DOI publications (such as People, Land and Water) and NBC Profiles newsletter.
- ❖ DOI sponsored a Town Hall meeting with GSA and Physicians from the Department of Federal Occupational Health (FOH) on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The purpose was to address general building occupant concerns relating to the project.
- ❖ The DOI MPO publishes a bimonthly newsletter of ongoing Modernization activities which is posted on the MPO website and is handed out at the tenant user group meetings.

In April 2006, OSHA performed an unscheduled visit to the MIB. Although no formal report of the visit has been received, there were no IAQ issues identified during the course of the visit or in the debrief that followed.

The DOI MPO monitors and researches employee complaints to ensure timely response and follow through.

Starting in June 2006, the Modernization Office will initiate a building occupant forum. This forum will provide general modernization information and address questions and concerns of the occupants regarding the project.

Such information and additional details will be provided in a complete assessment of employee concerns by September 1, 2006, as requested by the Committee.