



U.S. Office of Special Counsel
1730 M Street, N.W., Suite 218
Washington, D.C. 20036-4505

OSC SELECTS DETROIT AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER FOR 2010 PUBLIC SERVANT AWARD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Darshan A. Sheth, (202) 254-3617; dsheth@osc.gov

WASHINGTON, DC/January 19, 2011—The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) has selected as the recipient of its Public Servant Award for 2010, Vincent M. Sugent, an Air Traffic Controller with the Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW), Detroit, Michigan. OSC recognizes Mr. Sugent's substantial contribution to public service through his disclosures of serious aviation safety hazards and public health risks at DTW.

Mr. Sugent repeatedly sounded the alarm about serious health and safety issues regarding dangerous air traffic control procedures in place at the DTW Air Traffic Control Tower, as well as the effects of mold contamination in the Tower. Between 2007 and 2008, Mr. Sugent, accompanied by several colleagues, filed four disclosures with OSC, all including allegations of a substantial and specific danger to public health and/or safety. Mr. Sugent's disclosures have been largely substantiated by DOT's investigations.

Among other disclosures, Mr. Sugent's allegations included that DTW managers directed the operation of an unsafe landing and departure configuration known as the Southwest Flow without ensuring appropriate spacing between aircraft, did not respond truthfully when asked by Congress about the safety of the configuration, and knowingly repeated the operation months later. He also drew attention to inconsistent guidance and signage affecting the travel of aircraft on taxiways at DTW, as well as problems in the segregation of jet and propeller aircraft. His disclosures related to mold in the tower highlighted deficiencies in the remediation efforts initiated by FAA and the health effects on employees working there.

DOT and FAA have taken corrective and administrative action in response to the investigative findings, including changing FAA and DTW guidance concerning runway operations, and reinstating remediation efforts to eradicate mold in the facility. Mr. Sugent has continued to work collaboratively with the agency to ensure that the remediation project proceeds as planned and that employee health concerns are addressed.

The Public Servant Award is a non-monetary and merit-based award to publicly recognize the most significant contributions made by federal whistleblowers who have either filed disclosures with OSC or who have sought relief from OSC on the grounds that they have suffered retaliation.

The award will be presented to Mr. Sugent at OSC's Midwest Field Office, Detroit, Michigan, by Associate Special Counsel William E. Reukauf on January 19, 2011. Mr. Reukauf said, "We are pleased to recognize

Mr. Sugent as a whistleblower who brought serious public health and safety concerns to light. We are grateful for his service to the public.” A photograph of Mr. Reukauf presenting the award to Mr. Sugent has been posted on OSC’s website at www.osc.gov.

To learn more about Mr. Sugent’s disclosures, the DOT investigations and OSC’s findings, please refer to OSC’s public file, which contains all the relevant documents, now available on our website.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent investigative and prosecutorial agency and operates a secure channel for disclosures of whistleblower complaints. Its primary mission is to safeguard the merit system in federal employment by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially retaliation for whistleblowing. OSC also has jurisdiction over the Hatch Act and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. For more information please visit our web site at www.osc.gov or call 1 (800) 872-9855.