



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Office of Compliance and Office of the Architect of the Capitol Reach Historic Settlement Agreement

Washington, DC—On May 8, 2007, the General Counsel of the Office of Compliance (OOC) and the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), following eight months of intensive negotiations, entered into a comprehensive settlement of a complaint and three citations issued against the AOC involving safety and health hazards existing in the Capitol Power Plant utility tunnels.

“Our ultimate goal in filing this Complaint was to protect the health and safety of employees,” said Peter Ames Eveleth, Office of Compliance General Counsel. “The Settlement Agreement that we have negotiated with the Architect of the Capitol is precedent-setting and creates a process that we are convinced will allow us to ensure that the existing hazards are corrected.”

Stephen T. Ayers, AIA, Acting Architect of the Capitol noted, “The AOC is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. This agreement will help address, on a comprehensive basis, the issues in the tunnels, including taking appropriate actions to mitigate them. We appreciate the funding and support that Congress has provided to help us address these issues.”

Significant features of the settlement include:

The AOC will permanently abate the safety and health hazards within five years unless extended by mutual agreement of the parties or necessitated by funding shortfalls. Until the safety and health hazards are permanently corrected, the AOC will immediately implement any reasonably necessary interim measures to protect employees.

A baseline audit will be conducted in the tunnels to identify all health and safety hazards existing in the tunnels. Based on this audit, the AOC will develop a comprehensive site management plan and specific milestone dates it will follow for correcting all of the hazards. Additional audits will be conducted quarterly until the hazards are permanently abated.

Representatives of the General Counsel and the AOC will meet at least monthly to discuss any hazards, inspections, and any other matter related to the settlement. The AOC will permit an employee representative who works in the tunnels to attend these meetings.

AOC progress will be closely monitored by the OOC General Counsel who will assure that abatement milestone dates are being met.

The settlement is subject to the approval by the OOC's Executive Director and a Hearing Officer previously appointed by the Executive Director to preside over this litigation. Upon approval by the OOC Board of Directors, the OOC General Counsel if necessary, may petition the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit to enforce the hearing officer's decision.

Copies of the OOC complaint, citations, and settlement agreement are available in the CPP Administration Building (202.225.4380); the Safety, Fire and Environmental Programs Office, FHOB H2-514 (202.226.0630); and the Office of the General Counsel, Office of Compliance, LOC Adams Building, 110 2nd Street, SE, Room LA 200 (202.724.9250).

The Office of Compliance advances safety, health and workplace rights in the U.S. Congress and the legislative branch. Established as an independent agency by the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995, the Office educates employees and employing offices about their rights and responsibilities under the Act, provides an impartial dispute resolution process and investigates and remedies violations of the Act.

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