REPORT ON FAA'S ACTIONS TO ADDRESS MOLD AT THE DETROIT METROPOLITAN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER FACILITY

Federal Aviation Administration

Report Number: AV-2006-055

Date Issued: July 11, 2006

Memorandum

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary
of Transportation
Office of Inspector General

Subject: ACTION: Report on FAA's Actions To Address Mold at the Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower Facility
Federal Aviation Administration
AV-2006-055

Date: July 11, 2006

From: David A. Dobbs
Assistant Inspector General
for Aviation and Special Program Audits

Reply to Attn. of: JA-10

To: Federal Aviation Administrator

This report presents the results of our review of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) actions to address mold at the Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower facility (the Facility). The review was initiated at the request of several members of the Michigan congressional delegation. Specifically, the Members expressed concerns regarding allegations that FAA was not properly addressing mold issues found at the Facility and that this was causing air traffic controllers to become ill. A copy of the congressional request is included at the Appendix to this report.

We conducted the review between February 2006 and May 2006. Our scope and methodology can be found at Exhibit A. Exhibit B lists the agencies we contacted or visited. We conducted this program audit in compliance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards as prescribed by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Our objectives were to determine whether FAA has taken effective actions to remediate mold growth found at the Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control facility and prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. We met with staff from several of the requesting congressional offices in May 2006 to discuss our results. A copy of that briefing is attached at Exhibit C.

RESULTS IN BRIEF

FAA has taken actions to remove mold from the Facility but has not alleviated the source of moisture causing its growth. Until the moisture source has been controlled, mold will continue to be an ongoing problem. FAA is aware of this issue and advised us that projects to address moisture and humidity problems will begin in late July 2006 and are expected to be complete in November 2006. Those projects include sealing and caulking the exterior of the tower to eliminate water infiltration; additional replacement of interior wallboard; and further heating, ventilation, and air conditioning work to manage humidity.

Completing those projects on schedule is essential to fully remediate mold at the Facility. We are recommending that FAA provide the requesting Members of Congress with a list of the planned actions to complete mold remediation efforts and alleviate moisture infiltration at the Facility. We are also recommending that FAA include the expected completion date for each project.

BACKGROUND

Mold is a common fungus that may be detected visually or by odor. It grows best in warm, damp, or humid conditions but can survive in dry conditions. Whether mold is dead or alive, exposure to mold may cause symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, or skin irritation in sensitive individuals. Persons with a compromised immune system are at an increased risk.

It is not necessary to identify the type of mold or conduct sampling as mold must be removed regardless of type. There are no Federal standards for airborne concentrations of mold or mold spores. Air sampling provides information that is valid only at the time the sample was taken, and results may be difficult to interpret. Remediation includes removing mold and alleviating the source of moisture. Until the source of moisture is controlled, remediation efforts are not complete.

The Facility is a 12-story tower connected to a 2-story base building with a basement that houses offices, locker rooms, a lunch room, and the Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON). The elevator shaft is located in the center of the tower and extends from the basement to the 12th floor. According to FAA, floors 3 to 10 were designed as unoccupied spaces and form the tower shaft. These areas are unconditioned (no mechanical heating or cooling) and should not be occupied or used for storage. There is no common ventilation ductwork from these areas to occupied areas.

At the time of our review, there were a total of 146 employees at the Facility—49 assigned to the tower, 62 assigned to the TRACON, and 35 assigned to the Technical Operations area.

FINDINGS

FAA Has Taken Actions To Remove Mold at the Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower but Remediation Will Not Be Complete Until Moisture Issues Have Been Addressed

Mold was initially found in unoccupied space on the fourth and ninth floors of the tower in September 2004. In January 2005, contractors hired by FAA removed the mold identified on those floors but found additional mold that was outside the scope of the contract. During the same month, mold was found in the elevator shaft. However, the mold found in the elevator shaft was not immediately dealt with because it was located on fire-rated drywall, which could not be removed in sections because of safety issues.

In May 2005, FAA let another contract to remove the mold found on the third, fourth, and ninth floors. In October 2005, FAA began monthly inspections at the Facility. During the November 2005 inspection, additional mold was found on the third floor (this mold was removed) and in the elevator shaft.

As a result, in February 2006, FAA hired a contractor to conduct an assessment of mold in the elevator shaft and to develop a scope of work for remediation. The report recommended that FAA remove the mold using a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) vacuum and wipe the areas down with a detergent and water solution. FAA completed those steps on May 26, 2006.

In June 2005, FAA also let another contract to identify probable causes of the excess moisture. The report, published in August 2005, identified the contributing factors for excess moisture as (1) water infiltration at concrete panel joints and concrete slab edges around the exterior of the building, (2) location and placement of interior wallboard panels, and (3) heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) issues.

FAA officials at the Facility told us that contracts have been let to address each of the issues identified in the August 2005 report, and work is expected to begin at the end of July 2006 and be complete by November 2006. According to the FAA officials at the Facility, the late completion date is needed because the exterior caulking is an extensive project and can only be done during warm weather.

Several Employees Have Experienced Adverse Health Effects Related to Mold

Exposure to mold may cause symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, or skin irritation in sensitive individuals. Persons with a compromised immune system are at an increased risk. Several employees at the Facility have experienced adverse health affects related to mold exposure. These factors highlight the need for FAA to aggressively pursue completion of its remediation efforts.

As of May 2006, 5 of the 49 employees who work at the tower had filed a health claim for workers' compensation with the Department of Labor (DOL)—2 of those employees have not returned to work. In March and April of 2006, DOL accepted three of those claims—two for asthma and one for exposure to mold. Of the two remaining claims, one was denied and one is still pending a DOL decision.

As of May 2006, 1 of the 62 employees who work in the adjoining TRACON had filed a health claim for workers' compensation, which is still pending a DOL decision. None of the 35 Technical Operations employees who work in the same building had filed for workers' compensation.

At the request of FAA and Facility employees, three independent Federal agencies conducted reviews at the Facility to determine if the level of mold presents a health hazard to employees.

- In November 2005, the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducted a Health Hazard Evaluation of the Facility to determine if workers are exposed to hazardous materials or harmful conditions. The NIOSH review included an evaluation of medical records and a review of documents provided by FAA but did not include a site visit. In a verbal briefing to our office on the preliminary results, NIOSH officials stated that it is possible that mold exposure could have triggered some of the upper respiratory tract allergic-type symptoms that were reported by employees. However, NIOSH concluded that there is not enough mold present to pose a serious health hazard. As of July 2006, NIOSH had not issued a final report.

- In February 2006, the Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Services, Federal Occupational Health (FOH) office conducted an on-site visual inspection of the Facility, including the elevator shaft, to evaluate FAA's remediation efforts and determine if the mold presented a serious health hazard. The FOH report stated that the air quality within the Facility is acceptable and that abatement activities conducted were performed properly and in a safe manner.

- In March 2006, at the request of Facility employees, DOL's Office of Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) conducted a site inspection at the Facility. On June 19, 2006, OSHA issued its final report, which recommended that FAA eliminate all sources of water intrusion into the Facility and maintain and operate outside air ventilation systems in accordance with design specifications to prevent infiltration of unconditioned air. OSHA also noted that individuals with underlying health conditions may be more sensitive to mold and encouraged individuals experiencing illness to seek appropriate medical attention.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the FAA Administrator provide the requesting Members of Congress with a list of the planned actions to complete mold remediation efforts and alleviate moisture infiltration at the Facility and include the expected completion date for each project. We are also requesting that the FAA Administrator provide us with a copy of the information provided to the requesting Members.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL RESPONSE

On May 18, 2006, we held an exit conference with the Air Traffic Manager at the Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower and the Area Director, FAA Technical Operations. Those officials agreed with our findings and recommendations.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

Please provide the above requested information within 15 business days.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by you and your staff during our review. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me at (202) 366-0500 or Dan Raville, Program Director, at (202) 366-1405.

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cc: FAA Deputy Administrator
ATO Chief Operating Officer
FAA Chief of Staff
Anthony Williams, ABU-100

EXHIBIT A. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This review was conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards prescribed by the Comptroller General of the United States and included such tests as we considered necessary to provide reasonable assurance of detecting abuse or illegal acts. We conducted this review between February 2006 and May 2006 using the scope and methodology described below.

To determine what actions FAA has taken to address mold at the Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower facility (the Facility), we toured the Facility on February 16, 2006, to observe the extent of remediation efforts. We reviewed documentation and reports provided by FAA. We also conducted interviews with FAA officials at the local (Detroit), district, regional, and service areas and with local, regional, and national representatives from the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA).

To determine the current status of air traffic controllers' health claims at the Facility, we conducted interviews with FAA representatives and with NATCA officials at the local, regional, and national levels. We also reviewed documentation provided by FAA and NATCA.

To obtain a better understanding of Federal guidelines, we conducted interviews with and reviewed documents provided by several independent Federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, Indoor Environments Division; the Occupational Safety and Health Administration; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health; and Public Health Services, Federal Occupational Health (FOH).

We did not rely on automated databases as part of this audit.

EXHIBIT B. AGENCIES VISITED OR CONTACTED

- FAA Air Traffic Control—Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower
- FAA Technical Operations—Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower, Superior District Safety Management Office, and Central Service Area Headquarters
- National Air Traffic Controllers Association—Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower, Great Lakes Region, and Washington National Headquarters
- Environmental Protection Agency—Indoor Environments Division
- U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Services, Federal Occupational Health (FOH)

EXHIBIT C. OIG BRIEFING TO CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

Review of FAA Actions To Address Mold at the **Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower (DTW)**

May 25, 2006
Project Number 06A3007A000

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Objectives

The OIG received a letter dated January 9, 2006, from the following 6 Congressmen and 2 Senators:

Congressman John D. Dingell
Congresswoman Carolyn C. Kilpatrick
Congressman Sander Levin
Congressman John Conyers, Jr.
Congressman Joe Schwarz, M.D.
Congressman Thaddeus G. McCotter
Senator Carl Levin
Senator Debbie Stabenow

The OIG's objective was to respond to the following questions posed in the congressional letter:

- Has a proper and complete mold inspection and remediation been conducted at the facility, including direct sampling, air sampling, and physical intrusive inspecting?
- Has remediation occurred in the elevator shaft of the air traffic control tower?
- If remediation efforts have been concluded, why are air traffic controllers continuing to fall ill?

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Methodology

- On February 16, 2006, we visited Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower (DTW). As part of our visit, we toured the facility to determine the extent of remediation efforts.
- We also conducted interviews with officials from the following organizations:
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Indoor Environments Division
  - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Lansing, Michigan
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
    - Center for Disease Control (CDC), National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
    - Public Health Service (PHS), Federal Occupational Health (FOH)
  - U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
    - Technical Operations – Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower, District Office, Great Lakes Region, and Central Service Area
    - Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower
  - National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) - Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control Tower, Great Lakes Region, and Washington Headquarters
- We reviewed documentation and reports provided by FAA and the controllers' union, NATCA.

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Results in Brief

Has a proper and complete mold inspection and remediation been conducted at the facility, including direct sampling, air sampling, and physical intrusive inspecting?

- Remediation has not been completed at DTW, as moisture issues have not been resolved.
- Mold found in unoccupied space on the third, fourth, and ninth floors and in the elevator shaft has been removed. Monthly inspections are being conducted to document the physical condition and identify any additional moisture or mold issues.
- *All projects to address identified moisture and humidity issues are planned for completion by late November 2006. This is the most important step FAA needs to complete to alleviate any future mold problems.*
- According to OSHA, NIOSH, CDC, and EPA, it is not necessary to identify the type of mold or conduct sampling as mold must be removed regardless of type. Furthermore, there are no Federal standards for airborne concentrations of mold or mold spores.

Has remediation occurred in the elevator shaft of the air traffic control tower?

- Remediation of mold identified in the elevator shaft was completed on May 25, 2006.

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Results in Brief (continued)

If remediation efforts have been concluded, why are air traffic controllers continuing to fall ill?

As stated earlier, remediation efforts have not been completed. The following is the status of health claims at DTW as of May 25, 2006:

- 5 of 49 (10%) employees who work in the control tower at DTW have filed a workers' compensation claim with the Department of Labor — 3 of the 5 have returned to work.
- 1 of 62 (2%) employees who work in the adjoining Terminal Radar Approach Control facility (TRACON) has filed a workers' compensation claim with the Department of Labor.
- None of the 35 employees who work in Technical Operations at the tower have filed a workers' compensation claim.
- Of the six claims for workers' compensation, three were approved, one was denied, and two are pending.

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Background: Mold Basics

OSHA, NIOSH, CDC, and EPA provided the following information regarding mold:

- Mold is a fungus that is found everywhere. It grows best in warm, damp, or humid conditions but can survive in dry conditions.
- Mold itself is not toxic or poisonous, though it can produce mycotoxins. Almost all of the known effects of mycotoxin exposures are attributable to ingestion of large amounts of contaminated food. No conclusive evidence exists to link exposure to indoor airborne mycotoxins with human illness.
- Whether mold is dead or alive, exposure to mold may cause symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, or skin irritation in sensitive individuals. Persons with a compromised immune system are at an increased risk.
- Mold may be detected visually or by odor. It is not necessary to identify the type of mold or conduct sampling as mold must be removed regardless of type.
- Air sampling provides information only for the moment in time when the sample was taken, and results may be difficult to interpret. There are no Federal standards for airborne concentrations of mold or mold spores.
- Remediation is complete when the moisture source is identified/controlled and visible mold is removed.

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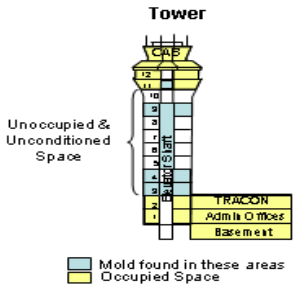
Background: DTW Layout

- DTW is a 12-story tower connected to a 2-story base building with a basement. The elevator shaft is located in the center of the tower and extends from the basement to the 12th floor. Stairs are used to obtain access to the cab from the 12th floor.
- The first and second floors contain offices, a lunchroom, locker rooms, and the TRACON. A hallway connects the tower with the TRACON.
- According to FAA, floors 3 through 10 were designed as *unoccupied* spaces and form the tower shaft. These areas are unconditioned (no mechanical heating or cooling) and should not be occupied or used for storage. There is no common ventilation ductwork from these areas to occupied areas.
- Floors 11 and 12 are occupied and conditioned spaces.
- The tower cab, located above the 12th floor, is a conditioned space with an exterior catwalk.



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Is remediation of mold at DTW complete? What actions has FAA taken?

Remediation at DTW is *not* complete.

Mold was found in unoccupied space on the third, fourth, and ninth floors as well as on the walls of the elevator shaft. In order for remediation to be complete, moisture sources must be addressed and mold must be removed. FAA has taken actions to remove visible mold on the three floors and in the elevator shaft, but has not completed projects to address the source of moisture. Actions taken by FAA include:

- January 2005 – Limited areas of moldy gypsum wallboard were removed on the fourth and ninth floors. Additional mold was discovered and was not removed as it was not in the statement of work. This work was accomplished in the May 2005 remediation.
- May 2005 – Remediation was conducted on the 3rd, 4th, and 9th floors to include a total of 110 total square feet of wallboard material. This work included remediation of additional mold found during the January 2005 remediation. The photo at right depicts the ninth floor gypsum wallboard remediation work.
- June 2005 – A moisture assessment was conducted by an FAA contractor to identify probable causes of excess moisture. The Moisture Assessment Report stated that contributing factors to moisture issues may be location and placement of gypsum wallboard panels, water infiltration at concrete panel joints, and water penetration of the concrete slab edges.

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Is remediation of mold at DTW complete? What actions has FAA taken? (continued)

- January 2006 – Remediation was conducted on the third floor in response to mold identified during the November monthly moisture inspection. The photo at right depicts this completed remediation that replaced the lower two feet of gypsum wallboard from the wall bordering the elevator shaft.
- February 2006 – In early February, a visual assessment of the control tower elevator shaft was conducted by FAA engineers, the Southwest Area Program Manager from Federal Occupational Health (FOH), and two independent Certified Industrial Hygienists contracted by the FAA. The purpose was to assess visible mold growth so that FAA could develop a scope of work for the elevator shaft remediation.
  - The FOH representative stated in the final report dated May 9, 2006, that DTW is "one of the cleanest FAA facilities FOH has inspected to date." The report also stated that mold within the elevator shaft is minimal and HEPA vacuuming was recommended to remove it.

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Is remediation of mold at DTW complete? What actions has FAA taken? (continued)

  - The independent Certified Industrial Hygienist contracted by the FAA stated in a report dated March 10, 2006, that there were isolated patches of visible mold growth of three square feet or less on seven floors of the elevator shaft that could be removed by HEPA vacuuming and wipe-down.
  - In late February, the FAA engineering team conducted another on-site assessment of the tower to identify actions necessary to prevent water infiltration and moisture condensation. In response, the engineering team developed a schedule of projects targeted for completion by the end of November 2006.

- March 2006 – A team from OSHA conducted an on-site review of conditions at DTW in response to an employee complaint. The report of OSHA's review has not yet been released.

- May 2006 – Remediation of the elevator shaft was conducted by HEPA vacuuming and damp wipe-down with detergent and water.

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What was the condition of the elevator shaft?

Several inspections of the elevator shaft have been conducted:

- June 2005 – An FAA contractor conducted a Moisture Assessment and reported that the visual inspection revealed minor surface mold growth on the interior shaft-liner at levels 6 through 9.
- February 2006 – Three parties (2 FAA contractors and an FOH official) inspected the elevator shaft. The official from the FOH's Public Health Service noted that there were small areas of visible mold in the elevator shaft that have not yet been remediated. One of the contractors reported that there were isolated patches of visible mold growth on the elevator shaft walls on seven various floors (3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11) measuring less than three square feet.
- October 2006 – As part of monthly facility inspections led by an FAA Technical Operations Supervisor, a team rides in the cab of the elevator and inspects the interior of the elevator shaft by peering through a hatch in the roof of the elevator cab.
- May 2006 – Mold in the elevator shaft was remediated by HEPA vacuuming and damp wipe-down with detergent and water. FAA continues to conduct monthly moisture inspections of the facility (including the elevator shaft) to identify mold or moisture issues.

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What did the mold in the elevator shaft look like?

- **Top Left:** Spots of visible mold growth on east wall of shaft of the third floor.
- **Top Right:** Visible mold growth on shaft on west wall of seventh floor.
- **Bottom Left:** Visible mold growth on shaft on west wall of eighth floor.
- **Bottom Right:** Visible mold growth on east wall of shaft of sixth floor.

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What additional actions are planned by FAA to address mold and moisture issues at DTW?

Mold identified at DTW has been removed, but projects to address moisture and humidity issues have not been completed. The facility conducts monthly moisture inspections to identify mold or moisture issues. The FAA has planned several projects to address moisture and humidity issues. These are the key steps FAA needs to complete so that water infiltration does not reoccur:

- **July - October 2006 -** Exterior sealing and caulking to eliminate water infiltration.
- **August - September 2006 -** Interior work that may include removal of walls/wallboard and changes to accommodate HVAC duct modifications if needed.
- **August - November 2006 -** Mechanical/electrical work including HVAC (Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning) work to control and manage humidity within the tower and elevator shafts.

Pictured:
Near right - Exterior caulking failure.
Far right - Moisture seeping into unoccupied space in the tower from the exterior wall.

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What is the status of the health of employees working at DTW?

As noted in the chart below, as of May 25, 2006, 5 of the 49 employees who work in the control tower have filed a health claim for workers' compensation (2 of whom have not returned to work), 1 of the 62 employees who work in the TRACON have filed a health claim for workers' compensation, and none of the 35 Technical Operations employees who work in the building have filed for workers' compensation.

DTW/TRACON/Technical Operations Statistics
(As of May 25, 2006)

Workgroup	Employees*	Filed Workers' Compensation	Have Not Returned to Work
DTW	49	5 (10%)	2 (4%)
Detroit TRACON	62	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Detroit Tech Ops	35	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	**146**	**6 (4%)**	**3 (2%)**

*excludes administrative staff

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What is the status of the health of employees working at DTW? (continued)

The following tables provide additional details on the five employees at the tower and one employee at the TRACON who filed for workers' compensation:

Tower Controller	Date Claim Filed	Dates Controller Was Out of Work	Did the Department of Labor Accept the Claim?
#1	September 30, 2005	October 1, 2005 to present	Yes, for Asthma, March 28, 2006
#2	September 27, 2005	October 1, 2005 to November 12, 2005	Yes, for Asthma, April 18, 2006
#3	September 8, 2005	July 26, 2005 to present	Yes, for Exposure to Mold, April 14, 2006
#4	December 29, 2005	December 14, 2005 to January 31, 2006	No, Denied
#5	January 17, 2006	December 19, 2005 to January 29, 2006	Pending

TRACON Controller	Date Claim Filed	Dates Controller Was Out of Work	Did the Department of Labor Accept the Claim?
#1	April 26, 2006	February 19, 2006 to present	Pending

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Does mold pose a serious health hazard at DTW?

According to officials at two Federal agencies, conditions at DTW do not pose a serious health hazard to employees:

- **November 2005** — NIOSH began conducting a Health Hazard Evaluation of DTW, including a review of medical records. The medical doctor on the NIOSH team stated that it is possible that mold exposure could have triggered some of the upper respiratory tract allergic-type symptoms that were reported by controllers but stated that the claims of actual occupational illness or disease due to mold exposure are not supported by the conditions at the tower. NIOSH concluded that there is not enough mold present to pose a serious health hazard.
- **February 2006** — FOH conducted a health assessment of the tower and stated that there is not enough mold to produce an affect on someone's health unless the person has a compromised immune system or allergic sensitivity to mold. FOH stated that the only mold at DTW was a small amount of dry mold in the elevator shaft.
- **March 2006** — OSHA conducted a site inspection although the elevator shaft could not be observed because it could not be taken out of service at the time of the OSHA inspection. As of May 25, 2006, OSHA has not released a final report of its assessment to determine if the level of mold at DTW presents a serious health hazard.

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Conclusions

As of May 25, 2006:

- Remediation is not complete at Detroit Metropolitan Air Traffic Control tower because moisture infiltration and humidity issues have not been corrected.
- All projects planned to eliminate the moisture are estimated to be completed by the end of November 2006.
- Of the 49 employees working in the tower at DTW, 5 have filed workers' compensation claims with the Department of Labor, of which 3 have been accepted; 1 has been denied; and 1 is pending. Two of the 5 employees who filed workers' compensation claims remain out of work.
- Of the 62 employees working in the TRACON adjoining DTW, 1 has filed a workers' compensation claim with the Department of Labor. The claim is pending.
- None of the 35 Technical Operations employees have filed a workers' compensation claim.

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APPENDIX. CONGRESSIONAL REQUEST LETTER TO OIG

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2006

Kenneth M. Mead, Inspector General
United States Department of Transportation
400 7th Street S.W. Room 9210
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Inspector General Meade:

We write with great concern to a serious issue occurring at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport's air traffic control tower. Over the last year, air traffic controllers have been getting sick while on the job. Many of these illnesses are attributed to black mold that has been found within the tower itself.

We have written two letters to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regarding this issue, and while we are told by the FAA remediation efforts have been conducted, we continue receiving calls from our constituents that work in the tower that they are getting sick when they enter the tower. Two of the more severe health cases amongst the air traffic controllers leave them in a leave without pay status, pending their Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) claim, due to the effects of their illnesses. Numerous others have been utilizing excessive sick leave due to mold related symptoms or illnesses.

We are also informed by the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) that their efforts to work with FAA officials to solve the problem have been met with a reluctant and inadequate effort to alleviate the black mold problem. We believe that the Inspector General should investigate the black mold remediation process at Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Specifically, the Inspector General should examine the following questions:

1. If remediation efforts have been concluded, why are air traffic controllers continuing to fall ill? Has a proper and complete mold inspection and remediation been conducted at the facility, including direct sampling, air sampling, physical intrusive inspecting?

2. Has remediation occurred in the elevator shaft of the air traffic control tower?

For over a year, this has been a serious issue at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, and yet some of our constituents are still getting ill when they enter the air traffic control tower. It is important that those who work at the tower know that the black mold has been remediated properly. It is equally important that the flying public know that the air traffic controllers who help guide them into Detroit Metro know that they are healthy and able to do their jobs safely and effectively.

Sincerely,

John D. Dingell
Member of Congress

Carolyn C. Kilpatrick
Member of Congress

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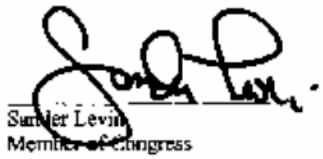
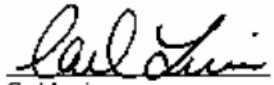
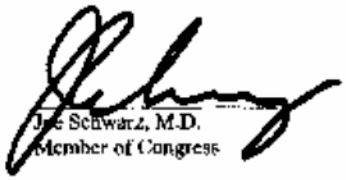


Sander Levin
Member of Congress

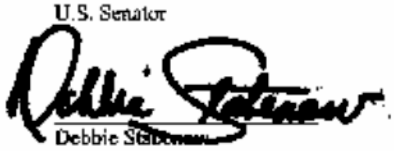
John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



Carl Levin
U.S. Senator



Joe Schwarz, M.D.
Member of Congress



Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator

Thaddeus G. McCotter
Member of Congress

Appendix. Congressional Request Letter to OIG