



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
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October 2, 2018
HETA 2018-0157
Interim Letter

Sheriff Rick Staly
Flagler County Sheriff's Office
Operations Center
901 E. Moody Blvd.
Bunnell, Florida 32110

Dear Sheriff Staly:

Thank you for hosting the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's (NIOSH) visit at Flagler County Sheriff's Office Operations Center on September 6, 2018. We visited in response to a management, union, and confidential employee request for a health hazard evaluation to address health concerns regarding indoor environmental quality.

Opening Meeting

On September 6, 2018, we held a brief opening meeting with employee representatives and management to discuss this health hazard evaluation request and to describe the objectives and activities for our walkthrough visit. We outlined that our primary aims for the visit were to (1) visually assess the interior and exterior of the Operations Center for indications of water damage and/or mold growth; (2) visually assess the roof and ventilation system of the Operations Center; and (3) informally speak with employees about their work and any work-related health concerns they might have. NIOSH was granted permission to take photos of the building during the walkthrough.

Walkthrough Visit

After the opening meeting, we toured the Operations Center starting with general office areas followed by the mechanical room and secure areas and then the roof and building exterior. Employee representatives and the building's energy manager led the tour and answered our questions.

Voluntary Employee Interviews

After the Operations Center walkthrough, NIOSH staff members conducted voluntary employee interviews at the Flagler County Courthouse. All current employees were invited to participate. At the start of each interview, employees were informed that participating in the interview was voluntary and confidential. Employees were offered copies of an informational handout

describing the NIOSH site visit and booklets describing the NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluation Program.

We interviewed 26 current employees. Employees reported skin, eye, respiratory, and systemic symptoms that improved when away from the building. Some also reported symptoms when handling paper documents or files retrieved from the Operations Center. Some employees reported stagnant or stuffy air and musty, mildew, or stale odors. Some employees reported that the air felt sticky in the building. Most health complaints came from occupants in the East side of the building.

Closing Meeting

At the end of our visit, we held a closing meeting with an employee representative and management. We discussed the following:

- Operations Center employees and management were helpful and willing participants during the walkthrough and employee interviews. Participation and cooperation during our visit helped us tremendously.
- We requested copies of all ventilation testing and balancing reports from 2015 through present and for architectural plans of the interior and exterior wall structures for the Operations Center from the County Engineer, Faith Alkhatib.
- We discussed our next steps, which include NIOSH staff meeting as a team to discuss our visit, an interim letter, and final report.

Initial Observations and Interim Recommendations

During our walkthrough visit, we observed water runoff from the roof accumulating at the foundation of the building. We noted areas of the roof that had been patched, indicating possible past water intrusions. We also observed some areas near the base of the exterior walls with exposed cement block. There might be the potential for water intrusion through the building envelope, and thus a potential for hidden mold growth. This potential for hidden mold is consistent with employee reports of musty odors (especially after rains), and health symptoms. We observed evidence of water stains from condensation around the walk-in refrigerator and freezer in the evidence room. At this time, we do not recommend further air sampling for mold spores. There are no U.S. health-based exposure limits for biological contamination set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or recommended by NIOSH. Measurements of mold in air are highly variable and dependent on the mold species' lifecycle stages (e.g., spore formation). In many cases, very short-term sampling for mold spores is conducted and results may not be representative of actual exposures. We suggest that resources be placed towards the following recommendations.

- We recommend a contractor with expertise in building science (preferably one not previously associated with this building) evaluate the building for water intrusion through the building envelope and conduct an inspection for hidden mold (which might include cutting inspection openings in the interior dry-wall). Particular attention should be placed on the East side of the building from which the health complaints came.

- Ensure all downspouts located around the exterior of the building have extenders long enough to direct water runoff away from the building. The grading of the ground surrounding the building’s foundation might affect the direction of water runoff.
- Ensure dehumidifiers used to dry evidence are cleaned and maintained regularly according to the manufacturer’s recommendations.
- Continue to work towards eliminating any condensation issues related to the walk-in refrigerator and freezer in the evidence room.
- Clean documents from the building with a vacuum equipped with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, make copies, or create electronic versions of documents when occupants report health symptoms associated with handling the documents.
- We recommend a qualified ventilation contractor (preferably one not previously associated with this building) evaluate the positions and control sequence for the outside and return air dampers in each air-handling unit. Ensure that the minimum outdoor air required is supplied to all occupied areas of the building under all operating conditions.

We are currently reviewing mechanical drawings, ventilation testing and balancing reports, photographs, and field notes. We will provide more information as it becomes available.

NIOSH recommends that copies of this letter be posted in a prominent place accessible to the employees for a period of 30 calendar days. If you or others at Flagler County Sheriff’s Office Operations Center have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Alyson Johnson (304-285-5851 or yqa0@cdc.gov) or Rachel Bailey (304-285-5757 or feu2@cdc.gov).

Sincerely,



Alyson R. Johnson, MPH, PhD
LT, US Public Health Service
Industrial Hygienist
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cc:

Confidential requestors
Gabe Fuetes, PBA union representative
Laura Kruger, PBA union representative
Craig Coffey, Flagler County Administrator

Nate McLaughlin, Flagler County Commissioner
Heidi Petito, General Services Director, Flagler County Board of County Commissioners
Mark Strobridge, Chief, Organizational Services Division, Flagler County Sheriff’s Office
Dr. Carina Blackmore, State Epidemiologist, Florida Department of Health
Dr. Sharon Watkins, Lead Occupational Epidemiologist, Florida Department of Health
Benjamin Ross, Deputy Regional Administrator, OSHA Region IV