

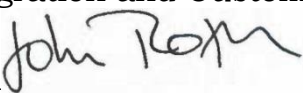


OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / www.oig.dhs.gov

December 11, 2014

TO: The Honorable Thomas S. Winkowski
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

FROM: John Roth 
Inspector General

SUBJECT: *Management Alert - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's
San Pedro Service Processing Center, San Pedro, California*

During an audit of Department of Homeland Security warehouses, we identified serious safety issues at the San Pedro Service Processing Center that require your immediate action.

The 2-acre San Pedro Service Processing Center includes 10 federally-owned buildings. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) used the main building of the center to house detainees, but closed and abandoned the facility in 2007 because of building deficiencies and life safety concerns. ICE Enforcement Removal Operations (ERO) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) employees are currently working in part of the main building, even though safety issues have not been resolved. In addition, ICE is processing aliens at this facility.

We are recommending that the building be vacated immediately until all safety issues are corrected or until ICE determines that the facility is safe.

Please call me with any questions, or your staff may contact Anne L. Richards, Assistant Inspector General of Audits, at (202) 254-4100.



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Management Alert

Employee Safety at the San Pedro Processing Center

This alert describes urgent life safety issues that pose an immediate or potential danger to ICE employees at a Department of Homeland Security-owned facility in San Pedro, California.

We recommend that ICE take immediate action and vacate the building until all safety issues are corrected or until ICE determines that the facility is safe. We will issue a more detailed report on the San Pedro Processing Center when our audit work is complete.



The San Pedro Service Processing Center was originally constructed in 1938. In 1988, Immigration and Naturalization Service took possession of the building and in 1990 added a three-story cast-in-place concrete addition to create the former Service Processing Center.

The 2-acre San Pedro Service Processing Center includes 10 federally-owned buildings. ICE used the main building of the center to house detainees, but closed and abandoned the facility in 2007 because of building deficiencies and life safety concerns. According to an ICE official, ICE employees moved into the building in 2008. ICE ERO and HSI employees occupy about one-third of the first floor of the main building, using it as office space. Most of the building (90 percent) is not occupied.

Federal officials also reported to us that ICE has been processing and temporarily holding detainees in this facility, which we confirmed during a December 8 site visit.

In October 2012, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers directed a comprehensive Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) of the center. On September 30, 2013, the assessment team reported there were “many critical life safety issues that should be addressed immediately” and concluded that “unless the building’s current fire sprinkler and fire alarm/life safety systems are improved the



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building is not a safe work environment.” The assessment team also recommended that ICE temporarily move mission operations to a more suitable site.

The FCA identified the following urgent life safety issues posing an immediate or potential danger to ICE employees:

- Fire Protection – immediate danger: The building’s pre-action fire suppression (sprinkler) system has been shut off on all floors except the basement, likely due to corrosion, and has not been inspected, tested, or maintained in 5 years. The system requires repair or replacement. This system is an urgent life safety issue that poses an immediate danger.
- Fire Barriers – potential danger: There are no functional fire separations between the areas with active sprinkler protection and the unprotected areas of the building. A fire starting in an area without fire sprinkler protection could overwhelm the sprinkler system in a protected area. This is an urgent life safety issue that poses a potential danger.
- Fire Alarm System – potential danger: The fire alarm system is functional, but does not cover the entire building and does not transmit a signal to offsite locations, such as a monitoring station. Additionally, the fire alarm system lacks smoke detectors, horns, and strobes. This is an urgent life safety issue that poses a potential danger.
- Exit Signage and Exits – potential danger: Not all exit signs are illuminated; exit signs appear to be in need of repair or bulb replacement. Several exit discharge locations allow occupants to leave the building, but be confined to lockable fenced-in areas, likely because the facility used to be a detention center
- Fire-Rated Penetrations – potential danger: There are unsealed and improperly sealed fire barriers in most fire-resistant floors and partitions/walls in the building.

ICE should have corrected these deficiencies or vacated the building.

Officials in ICE’s Office of Asset and Facilities Management (OAFM), including some in the Safety and Health Branch, said they were unaware of any health or safety concerns at San Pedro, even though the Facilities Management Branch received the FCA that showed the safety risks.

OAFM was not fully responsive to our requests for a copy of the FCA for the center, initially providing only portions of it that did not show the safety



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concerns. OAFM also questioned our interest in this issue and said it did not fall within the scope of our original audit. Finally, after we received a copy of the complete document, ICE informed us it had a contract in place to address the building deficiencies. However, the repairs have not been completed and, in our opinion, ICE employees should not be working in the facility.

We notified ICE's Health and Safety Office of our concerns, and ICE arranged to have a Safety and Health Specialist (Federal Occupational Health contractor) perform a safety and health inspection on Monday, December 8, 2014. On December 9, the Department informed us that within 48 hours ICE plans to move all employees from the San Pedro facility to other office space.

We also shared information about the condition of this facility and potential risks to employees with the Department's Health and Safety Office. Based on the information we provided, the Department also questioned why employees are working in this building. We ask that you keep our office informed of any decisions or actions taken in regard to this facility.