

**Management Alert —  
Potential Safety Issue at  
the FLETC Artesia  
Warehouse**





# DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

## *Management Alert — Potential Safety Issue at the FLETC Artesia Warehouse*

**December 8, 2017**

### **Why We Did This Alert**

This Alert is part of an ongoing audit to review training strategies and capabilities for U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Because of a potential safety concern, we believe it is important to inform you now about an issue identified at the Border Patrol Academy, located at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Artesia, New Mexico.

### **What We Recommend**

We recommend FLETC conduct engineering and safety evaluations and make necessary repairs to Building 13 to ensure the safety of all personnel; and ensure a thorough safety evaluation is conducted of the driving course.

#### **For Further Information:**

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202) 254-4100, or email us at [DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov)

### **What We Found**

During our August 2017 site visit to the FLETC Artesia Training Center, we identified a potential safety issue at a warehouse, Building 13. The Border Patrol Academy had been using the warehouse to train new hires on search and conveyance.

In 2009, a vehicle from an adjacent driving course struck the warehouse. The collision left a hole in the metal siding of the warehouse and damaged one of the supporting columns, bending it and shearing it off at the building foundation, as well as damaging the column's attached roof beam.

FLETC officials could not provide documentation to support that an engineering evaluation was conducted to determine whether the accident affected the integrity of the warehouse structure. Border Patrol Academy officials also expressed safety concerns about using the warehouse to train new hires.

Continuing to use the warehouse for training and other purposes without an independent engineering or structural safety evaluation may increase the safety risk for trainees and staff. Additionally, continuing to use the driving course adjacent to the warehouse without evaluating the need for safety barriers increases the risk of injury to people and damage to property.

### **FLETC Response**

FLETC officials agreed with our two recommendations and have procured the services of an engineering firm to evaluate the safety of Building 13 and the adjacent driving course.



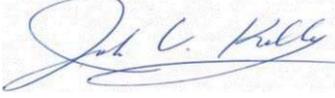
## OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / [www.oig.dhs.gov](http://www.oig.dhs.gov)

December 8, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: Thomas J. Walters  
Director  
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center

FROM: John V. Kelly   
Acting Inspector General

SUBJECT: *Management Alert — Potential Safety Issue at the  
FLETC Artesia Warehouse*

For your action is our final report, *Management Alert — Potential Safety Issue at the FLETC Artesia Warehouse*. We incorporated the formal comments provided by your office.

The report contains two recommendations aimed at improving the safety at Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's (FLETC) training venues. Your office concurred with both recommendations. Based on information provided in your response to the draft report, we consider recommendations 1 and 2 open and resolved.

Once your office has fully implemented the recommendations, please submit a formal closeout letter to us within 30 days so that we may close the recommendations. The memorandum should be accompanied by evidence of completion of agreed-upon corrective actions. Please send your response or closure request to [OIGAuditsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:OIGAuditsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov).

Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act*, we will provide copies of our report to congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post the report on our website for public dissemination.

Please call me with any questions, or your staff may contact John E. McCoy II, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Audits at (202) 254-4100; or Donald Bumgardner, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audits, at (202) 254-4100.



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### **Background**

The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) Artesia Training Center in New Mexico is one of three FLETC residential training sites in the United States. This 3,620-acre site has the capacity to house between 1,700 and 1,800 students at any given time. The property features a full range of facilities for conducting basic and advanced law enforcement training. The training center includes fences that replicate barriers used throughout various border locations; classrooms; interview suites; indoor and outdoor ranges; live-fire shoot houses; non-lethal shoot houses; airplanes; and pistol shooting simulators. Also available are practical exercise sites with checkpoints, barns, vehicle inspection areas (buses and trains), and multiple driving courses.

The Border Patrol Academy is a tenant agency at the FLETC Artesia Training Center, where it conducts basic training for new hires. Academy officials plan to hold 24 classes of 50 students each in fiscal year 2018.<sup>1</sup>

Following a request from Border Patrol Academy officials in FY 2016 for a venue to conduct search and conveyance training, FLETC designated Building 13 for that purpose. The warehouse had been in use to store property since the building was damaged by a vehicle in 2009.

### **Results of Audit**

During our August 2017 site visit to the FLETC Artesia Training Center, we identified a potential safety issue at a warehouse, Building 13. The Border Patrol Academy had been using the warehouse to train new hires on search and conveyance. In January 2009, a vehicle from an adjacent driving course struck the warehouse (see figure 1 for a picture of the accident).

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<sup>1</sup> The FY 2018 classes scheduled do not include the capacity increase expected from the Executive Order to hire an additional 5,000 Border Patrol agents.



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**Figure 1. Accident Site**



Source: FLETC Accident Investigation Report, dated September 2009

The collision left a hole in the metal siding of the warehouse and damaged one of the supporting columns, bending it and shearing it off at the building foundation, as well as damaging the column's attached roof beam (see figures 2 and 3, which show the warehouse damage).

**Figure 2. Accident Site – Building 13**



Source: Office of Inspector General (OIG) as of August 2017



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The damage to the side of the warehouse resulted in exposed sharp metal edges, which according to Directive # 70-09, *FLETC Occupational Safety and Health Program*, is considered a physical hazard. The directive defines a hazard such as sharp edges as a potential for harm associated with a condition or activity that, if left uncontrolled, can result in an injury.

**Figure 3. Accident Site – Building 13**



Source: OIG and U.S. Border Patrol Academy as of August 2017

According to a FLETC official, he decided to condemn the warehouse immediately after the accident but did not submit any paperwork about the inspection or determination. He further said that FLETC had plans to demolish the building in 2009; yet, FLETC continued to use it for warehousing and training purposes.

In 2009, a FLETC facilities project manager provided his supervisor with three recommendations to address the potential safety issue. Although at that time an engineering safety evaluation was not conducted, the project manager recommended FLETC:

- replace the column and the horizontal beams;



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- leave the column where it is and weld the column to the bottom plate in order to better secure it; or
- put siding over the opening and paint it to match the building.

Despite the suggested recommendations, FLETC took limited action, as shown in figures 2 and 3. FLETC officials could not provide documentation that an engineering evaluation was conducted to determine whether the accident affected the integrity of the warehouse structure.

A FLETC official confirmed the driving course is still in use and has not been modified to include safety barriers since the accident (figure 4 shows the driving course adjacent to the warehouse and other buildings).

**Figure 4. Driving Course Adjacent to the Warehouse**



Source: U.S. Border Patrol, October 2017

During our site visit, Border Patrol Academy officials expressed safety concerns about using the warehouse to train new hires. In September 2017, we voiced our concerns to FLETC about the building's structure and potential risk for injury to students and training staff. In response to our concerns, the FLETC Site Director wrote in an email:

*... [B]eginning on [September 15, 2017] the building 13 warehouse was closed to training and any other type of occupation minus periodic safety and maintenance checks. To accommodate the Border Patrol Academy's continued requirements, FLETC identified building 14 as an alternative location available for use by October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. Building 13 will remain secured and off limits until its disposition and possible further use is determined. If the building is identified for future use, it will be inspected by an engineer to determine its safety status and any relevant repairs if applicable.*



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In October 2017, we met with an official from the office of DHS Safety and Health. This office is responsible for coordinating all safety and health program activities, including program effectiveness and compliance with Federal and departmental requirements. Based on the information and pictures we presented, the official recommended that FLETC conduct a safety and structural evaluation of Building 13. Furthermore, the official questioned whether FLETC took appropriate action on the driving course to mitigate any future vehicle accidents with the warehouse. The official suggested that FLETC use a positive (safety) barrier to prevent a vehicle from leaving the driving course. According to the official, the vehicle accident in 2009 could have been deadly if the vehicle had struck the purlin (the warehouse's horizontal steel beam), as shown in figure 2, interior picture.

Continuing to use the warehouse for training and other purposes without an independent engineering or structural safety evaluation increases the safety risks for trainees and staff. Additionally, continuing to use the driving course adjacent to the warehouse without evaluating the need for safety barriers increases the risk of additional accidents or injuries.

### **Recommendations**

1. We recommend that FLETC conduct an engineering and safety evaluation and make necessary repairs to Building 13 to ensure the safety of all personnel.
2. We recommend that FLETC conduct an engineering and safety evaluation of the driving course to determine whether safety barriers around the course should be erected to minimize injuries to personnel and additional property damage.

### **Management Comments and OIG Analysis**

FLETC concurred with our recommendations and provided comments to the draft report. A summary of FLETC's response and our analysis follows. We have included a copy of FLETC's management comments in their entirety in appendix A. FLETC also provided technical comments to our report. We made changes to incorporate these comments, as appropriate.

**Response to Recommendation #1: Concur.** FLETC relocated the Border Patrol Academy from Building 13 to Building 30. FLETC also procured an engineering firm to conduct an in-depth safety analysis and provide cost estimates to repair Building 13, which FLETC plans to implement. The estimated completion date is August 31, 2018.



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**OIG Analysis:** FLETC's proposed actions meet the intent of our recommendation. The recommendation is resolved and will remain open until FLETC provides evidence of the actions taken as a result of the engineering and safety evaluation of Building 13.

**Response to Recommendation #2: Concur.** FLETC placed high-speed jersey barriers between Range 4 and Building 13. FLETC agreed to procure an engineering firm to conduct an engineering and safety evaluation of the driving course. The estimated completion date is August 31, 2018.

**OIG Analysis:** FLETC's proposed actions are responsive to the recommendation. The recommendation is resolved and will remain open until FLETC provides documentation confirming actions taken as a result of the engineering and safety evaluation of the driving course.

### Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002*, Pub. L. No. 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135, which amended the *Inspector General Act of 1978*.

This Alert is part of our ongoing audit of *DHS Training Needs for Hiring 15,000 Border Patrol Agents and Immigration Officers*, and to determine whether U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement have training strategies and capabilities in place to train the 15,000 new agents and officers they plan to hire. In the course of our fieldwork we conducted a site visit to the Artesia, New Mexico Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. During this visit, we identified a potential safety concern and believe it warrants immediate attention.

We interviewed officials from the Border Patrol Training Academy, FLETC Artesia and Glynco campuses, and DHS Safety and Health. We toured FLETC facilities in Artesia, New Mexico; made observations; and took photographs of the facilities. We also requested, reviewed, and analyzed key documentation and correspondence from both FLETC and the Border Patrol Training Academy.

We conducted this review as part of our ongoing audit under the authority of the *Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended*, and according to the generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objectives.



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The Office of Audits major contributors to this report are Christine Haynes, Director; Cecilia Carroll, Audit Manager; Roger Thoet, and Christine Meehan, Auditors; John Kohler, Mike Brunelle, and Tim Fonseth, Program Analysts; Kevin Dolloson, Communications Analyst; and Tessa Clement, Independent Referencer.



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**Appendix A**  
**FLETC Comments to the Draft Report**

*Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers*  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
1131 Chapel Crossing Road  
Glynnco, Georgia 31524



**Homeland  
Security**

119-066 (DO)

MEMORANDUM FOR: John Roth  
Inspector General

FROM: Thomas J. Walters   
Director  
Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers

SUBJECT: Management's Response to "Management Alert – Potential Safety Issue at the FLETC Artesia Warehouse" (OIG Project No. 17-086-CBP-FLETC-ICE)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft "Management Alert – Potential Safety Issue at the FLETC Artesia Warehouse." The Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) appreciates the work of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in planning and conducting its review and issuing the Management Alert.

FLETC continues to provide U.S. Border Patrol Academy (BPA) training at the FLETC Office of Artesia Operations (OAO) location in a cost efficient, effective, and accountable manner. The OAO continues to work closely with the BPA to address the resource requirements of hiring and training 5,000 new Border Patrol Agents and the implementation of the new 117 day scenario-based training program. The OIG is to be commended for bringing forth the safety concerns of Building 13 and Driving Range 4. The OIG's independent review initiated a fresh awareness and examination of both venues. Both FLETC and the BPA will be better prepared to complete the DHS mission due to the OIG input and findings.

In FY 2016 the BPA requested to run a pilot program of its new 117 day training program. This program required several new training venues that were not part of the FLETC portfolio. One of the desired facilities was a search/conveyance training facility. Upon review of available OAO structures, the BPA requested the use of Building 13 as a temporary facility for the pilot program. FLETC concurred with the request and approved Building 13's use.

FLETC concurs with the two recommendations contained in the draft OIG Management Alert. Please see the attached for our detailed response.

[www.fletc.gov](http://www.fletc.gov)



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Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments will be provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Attachment



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#### **Attachment: DHS Management Response to Recommendations Contained in “Management Alert – Potential Safety Issue at the FLETC Artesia Warehouse”**

The Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General provided the following recommendations regarding the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) Office of Artesia Operations.

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend that the FLETC conduct an engineering and safety evaluation and make necessary repairs to Building 13 to ensure the safety of all personnel.

**FLETC Response:** Concur. FLETC has relocated the BPA continued venue requirement to Building 30. On November 6, 2017, FLETC procured the Engineering Firm of OCCAM/EC Consulting Engineers Inc., Albuquerque, New Mexico, to conduct an in-depth safety analysis and provide cost estimates for repair to Building 13. The contractor has 45 days from the notice of award to conduct their inspection and file their report with FLETC. Once received, FLETC will implement the recommendations of the engineering firm. The firm has indicated they will be on site on November 28, 2017 to conduct the review. The Estimated Completion Date (ECD) for the engineering and safety evaluation is: January 18, 2018. The ECD timeframe for implementation is: August 31, 2018.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that the FLETC conduct an engineering and safety evaluation of the driving course to determine whether safety barriers around the course should be erected to minimize injuries to personnel and additional property damage.

**FLETC Response:** Concur. On November 9, 2017, FLETC placed high speed jersey barriers between Range 4 and Building 13 for the entire distance of the building. FLETC has provided OIG photographs of the jersey barriers under separate cover and the Engineering Firm of OCCAM/EC Consulting Engineers Inc., Albuquerque, New Mexico will conduct an evaluation of the driving course. The Estimated Completion Date (ECD) for the engineering and safety evaluation is: January 18, 2018. The ECD timeframe for implementation is: August 31, 2018.



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**Appendix B**  
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