

CHRONOLOGY

25 SIGOURNEY STREET

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE SERVICES EMPLOYEE HEALTH ISSUES

- The DRS began occupying the building at 25 Sigourney Street in 1994.
- At the DRS's request, CONN-OSHA made a site visit on November 16, 1999 to conduct an industrial hygiene consultation in response to employee complaints regarding air quality. The A&R Employees Union requested a focused Indoor Air Quality Investigation from the Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the University of Connecticut Health Center. That report was forwarded by the DRS to the Department of Public Works on March 3, 2000, with a request that DPW assume the role of "investigating and resolving environmental issues at 25 Sigourney Street."
- Around the same time, complaints were on the rise from DRS employees who were becoming increasingly symptomatic with what appeared to be building related respiratory and dermatological conditions.
- As a result of the UCHC Report, the DPW began undertaking more comprehensive testing and sampling within the building. The Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Epidemiology and Occupational Health, was notified in the summer of 2001.

By that same time, employee complaints had risen to the point that the DRS Human Resources Office began maintaining a database of employees who were experiencing symptoms. In July 2001, there were 75 employees in the database. By August 2002, there were 146. In November of 2003, there were 201 registered employees. Employees were referred to the UCONN Health Center Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine for evaluation and treatment. While most employees chose to be followed by the UCHC, some retained their own private physicians. Most of the employees filed worker's compensation claims for medical costs and lost time.

DPW began taking steps to make extensive exterior and interior repairs to the building.

- Physicians began moving employees to different floors, or removing them from the building altogether, in 2001. Some employees were relocated to the DRS building at 92 Farmington Ave. Some went to one of DRS's regional offices; some telecommuted. The employees were removed temporarily until all of the remediation and renovation work could be completed.

The A&R Employees Union requested a Health Hazard Evaluation from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which began in December, 2001 and is still ongoing. A final report is expected sometime next year.

In the summer of 2002, due to the fact that some employees who had been moved to 92 Farmington Avenue were not improving, the DPW provided a location at 38 Wolcott Hill Road in Wethersfield where they could be relocated.

- Ultimately, 22 employees were removed from the building for varying lengths of time, due to building related health conditions.
- Beginning in May, 2004, with all remediation and renovation work completed, physicians began to release employees to come back into the building.
- As of August 2, 2004, 10 employees had returned. 4 employees have received, or have pending, disability retirements. 8 employees have not been released to return to the building yet due to ongoing symptoms.

On 8/23/04, one employee who returned to the building on 5/11/04 after being out since 4/16/01 was once again removed, this time permanently, due to a marked decrease in lung function since returning to the building. According to reports from the UCHC physicians, there are other similarly situated employees whose health has deteriorated since returning to the building within the last several months. The expectation is that some additional employees may be permanently removed from the building. Moreover, some or all of those who are still out will not be allowed to return at all and may be permanently disabled.

The DRS will ask the Department of Administrative Services to initiate a search for another suitable position in state service under Regulation 5-244 of the State Personnel Regulations for any employee who is deemed medically fit for duty, but is unable to work at 25 Sigourney Street. Every attempt will be made to secure a suitable position in another state agency. If no such positions are available, employees will be separated in good standing under Section 5-244. The expectation is that those who are eligible to retire will exercise their option to do so at that time.