

In our opinion, the hazardous conditions for which Department of Agriculture officials are responsible were primarily attributable to the absence of a coordinated Department-wide policy and of adequate standards, techniques, and procedures pertaining to the prevention and control of fire and related hazards. Also, we believe that the unsafe conditions for which the General Services Administration is responsible resulted because its buildings manager did not comply with established General Services Administration regulations and did not provide adequate maintenance in the attic and subbasement storage areas in the South Building.

In a letter dated September 29, 1965, the Director, Office of Plant and Operations, Department of Agriculture, informed us that he had checked various parts of our proposed report with the agencies of the Department having interest in those areas and had reviewed with officials of the General Services Administration certain of our findings. He noted that the issues we had raised were well taken and added that the Department was eliminating the hazards. The Director itemized certain specific actions which had been taken or were planned to correct the deficiencies we reported and stated that he expected that the actions which the Department was taking would also prevent the recurrence of such hazards.

In a letter dated October 20, 1965, the Assistant Administrator for Finance and Administration, General Services Administration, explained in detail the corrective measures which had been or would be taken on the various deficiencies noted in our proposed report.

We believe that the actions taken or contemplated by the Department of Agriculture and the General Services Administration are substantially responsive to our proposals and, if properly implemented, should eliminate and prevent the recurrence of the deficiencies disclosed in our review in the South Building. We noted, however, that similar deficiencies existed in three of six other governmental agency buildings which we subjected to a selective review in December 1965. Therefore, we are recommending to the Administrator of General Services that our findings be brought to the attention of the agency's managers in the other buildings under General Services Administration control with the request that similar reviews be made and any necessary corrective action be taken.

Although our findings pertain primarily to one of many governmental agency buildings in the Washington, D.C., area, we are bringing the results of our review to the attention of the Congress because the deficiencies disclosed both in that building and in three of six other buildings included in our subsequent review demonstrate some of the unsafe and hazardous conditions which should be avoided by all Government agencies. Also, our findings should be of interest to all Government agencies in connection with their responsibilities under the "Mission Safety-70" program initiated by the President on February 16, 1965, which has as its objective a 30-percent reduction of Federal employees' injuries and related costs by 1970.