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Governor

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

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TO: All Public School and Junior College Stakeholders

FROM: Donald J. Mares, Executive Director
Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

Peter Weir, Executive Director
Colorado Department of Public Safety

SUBJECT: Consolidation of school construction and inspection programs

DATE: 9/15/2009

As you are aware, current statutory and regulatory requirements related to public school construction and inspections are implemented through two separate agencies, the Division of Oil and Public Safety (OPS), in the Department of Labor and Employment and the Division of Fire Safety (DFS), in the Department of Public Safety. The inherent inefficiencies with this dual agency structure were addressed by House Bill 09-1151, which consolidates the public school construction and inspection programs within the Department of Public Safety on January 1, 2010. We are taking this opportunity to provide you an update on the progress of our consolidation efforts and to ask for your continued involvement in making improvements to the program.

Substantial improvements to the school construction and inspection programs have been made within both of our departments. While the programs in both departments experienced growing pains, both departments have actively streamlined their business processes to be more responsive to the needs of Colorado schools. We believe these improvements have benefited Colorado's schools and the communities they serve.

The consolidation of the programs will create a "one-stop shop" for schools and their contractors. Consolidation will significantly improve communications; provide quicker turnaround on plan reviews, inspections, and issuing permits and certificates of occupancy; reduce operational costs; decrease errors; and create safer schools. For example, issuance of building permits and certificates of occupancy by OPS are contingent on DFS approval of the associated fire plan review and fire inspections. Consolidation of the programs will create efficiencies by eliminating the need to coordinate between two different departments before permits and certificates of occupancy can be issued.

Both departments are committed to making the transition to a consolidated program as seamless as possible. To that end, we directed our respective division directors, Mahesh Albuquerque with OPS and Kevin Klein with DFS, to form a Transition Committee to

help ensure a smooth consolidation of the programs. The Transition Committee is responsible for integrating the separate divisions' personnel, systems, policies and procedures into the new program.

The Transition Committee has made substantial progress in identifying and addressing transition issues. One of the first issues addressed was where to physically locate the new program. Due to space limitations at both OPS and DFS, the entire DFS will be moving to the Department of Public Safety's main campus at 690 Kipling Street, in Lakewood. The Department of Public Safety is currently remodeling space to accommodate the newly formed Public School Construction and Inspection Section and the remaining DFS programs. This location will also help facilitate coordination with Colorado School Safety Resource Center, which will also move to 690 Kipling Street. Coordinating school safety efforts will be enhanced by having these programs under one roof.

Another issue addressed by the Transition Committee is the timing of the consolidation. The Transition Committee recommended, and we approved, moving the programs in December of this year. This will allow both departments additional time to address any unforeseen problems that may be associated with the physical relocation of the Public School Construction and Inspection Section before the January 1, 2010 implementation date.

The Transition Committee and the Governor's Office of Information Technology are currently working on integrating the two divisions' information management systems. They are looking at existing systems and the possibility of procuring a new system that will allow schools the ability to view the status of their projects on-line.

The Transition Committee will soon begin work on streamlining rules and procedures for the new Public School Construction and Inspection Section. We encourage you to actively participate in this process. The Transition Committee will be contacting stakeholders and asking for their input during the rulemaking process.

One of the key elements of House Bill 09-1151 is the expanded role of the Board of Appeals. While the Board of Appeals was previously limited to hearing appeals on code interpretation, under House Bill 09-1151 the Board of Appeals advises the Director in promulgating rules and enacting standards for the Public School Construction and Inspection Section.

By statute, the Board of Appeals will include one representative each from the:

- Colorado Association of School Boards;
- Colorado Association of School Executives;
- Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Council for Educational Facilities Planners International;
- Colorado Chapter of the International Code Council;
- Fire Marshal's Association of Colorado;
- Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association; and,
- Colorado Counties, Incorporated.

We will be contacting the leadership of each of these associations asking them to nominate a representative to the Board of Appeals. We have also agreed that members of the Board of Appeals appointed during the transition period will be reappointed for the terms starting January 1, 2010.

We are very excited about this opportunity to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state government. If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns, please feel free to bring them to our attention through either, Mahesh Albuquerque with OPS (Mahesh.Albuquerque@state.co.us / 303-318-8502) or Kevin Klein with DFS (Kevin.Klein@cdps.state.co.us / 720-852-6737).

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.