Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 1, 2005

The Honorable Marion Blakey
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington D.C. 20591

Dear Madam Administrator:

We write in regard to the health and well being of air traffic control specialists at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. In particular, we are concerned about the discovery of black mold in the air traffic control tower, and the remediation efforts that took place on January 22, 2005. The mold continues to pose a significant health risk to these employees, while the remediation efforts forced eight workers to seek medical attention.

In September 2004, during an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspection of the air traffic control tower at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, black mold was visually discovered on the fourth and ninth floors. The floors where the mold was discovered were adjacent to open cable runs and the elevator shaft. Five months passed before remediation began.

On January 22, 2005, remediation efforts began. However, no advance notice was given to employees. Rather, a one-time announcement was made over the public address system the day the remediation efforts began. Soon after the remediation efforts began, a number of air traffic controllers in the tower cab became ill, eight workers sought medical attention. The FAA evacuated the tower. Five hours later, after testing only oxygen levels, the agency required the controllers to return to the tower. Numerous controllers became ill after returning to the tower.

Please answer the following questions with regard to this matter:

1.) What does the agency plan to do to eliminate the toxic mold from the air traffic control tower? What will be the timetable involved? When will remediation begin again? When will it be completed?

2.) Why were the controllers sent back in only five hours after the original evacuation?

3.) Has the mold spread since it was first discovered? If so, where has it spread?

4.) What will be the impact on the employees and air traffic control operations?

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5.) What was done by the FAA during the interim period from when the black mold was discovered in September 2004 until the remediation efforts began in January 2005? Were these areas sealed off?

6.) What other actions does the agency plan to undertake to rectify the situation?

As you know the Detroit Metropolitan Airport is the eleventh busiest in the country with approximately 500,000 operations yearly. A smooth operation at the airport is critical to the economy of Michigan. Any disruptions to air traffic operations at Detroit result in a ripple effect throughout the Midwest and the National Airspace System.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

John D. Dingell
Member of Congress

Joe Knollenberg
Member of Congress

Carolyn C. Kilpatrick
Member of Congress

Thaddeus G. McCotter
Member of Congress

Carl Levin
U.S. Senator

Joe Schwarz, M.D.
Member of Congress

Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator

Sander Levin
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress