



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

FLASH REPORT

**PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS AT
FLOYD BENNETT FIELD,
GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**



Stored Materials in Hangar at Floyd Bennett Field

C-IN-NPS-0001-2005

NOVEMBER 2004



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Central Region

134 Union Blvd., Suite 510

Lakewood, Colorado 80228

November 18, 2004

Memorandum

To: Director, National Park Service
Superintendent, Gateway National Recreation Area

From: Anne L. Richards *Anne L. Richards*
Regional Audit Manager

Subject: Public Safety Concerns At Floyd Bennett Field, Gateway National Recreation Area, Report No. C-IN-NPS-0001-2004

This report presents information regarding a highly dangerous situation requiring immediate remedial action at Gateway National Recreation Area. Specifically, we observed numerous physical safety hazards in places that are easily accessible by the public.

Background

Floyd Bennett Field, the site of New York City's first municipal airport, is part of the Gateway National Recreation Area. It is located in Brooklyn, New York, and had over 1.6 million visitors in 2003. Visitors used the Recreation Area for activities such as aircraft restoration, hiking, biking, and overnight camping.

On October 28, 2004, Office of Inspector General auditors visited Floyd Bennett Field as part of our audit of the Department of the Interior's Management of Hazardous Sites. The objective of that audit is to evaluate the Department's processes and procedures to identify, evaluate, and prioritize sites containing hazardous substances. Although the conditions disclosed in this report are outside the original scope of our audit, we believe these unsafe conditions require immediate action.

We did not conduct a detailed review of the conditions at Gateway National Recreation Area. As a result, this review was not conducted in accordance with the *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

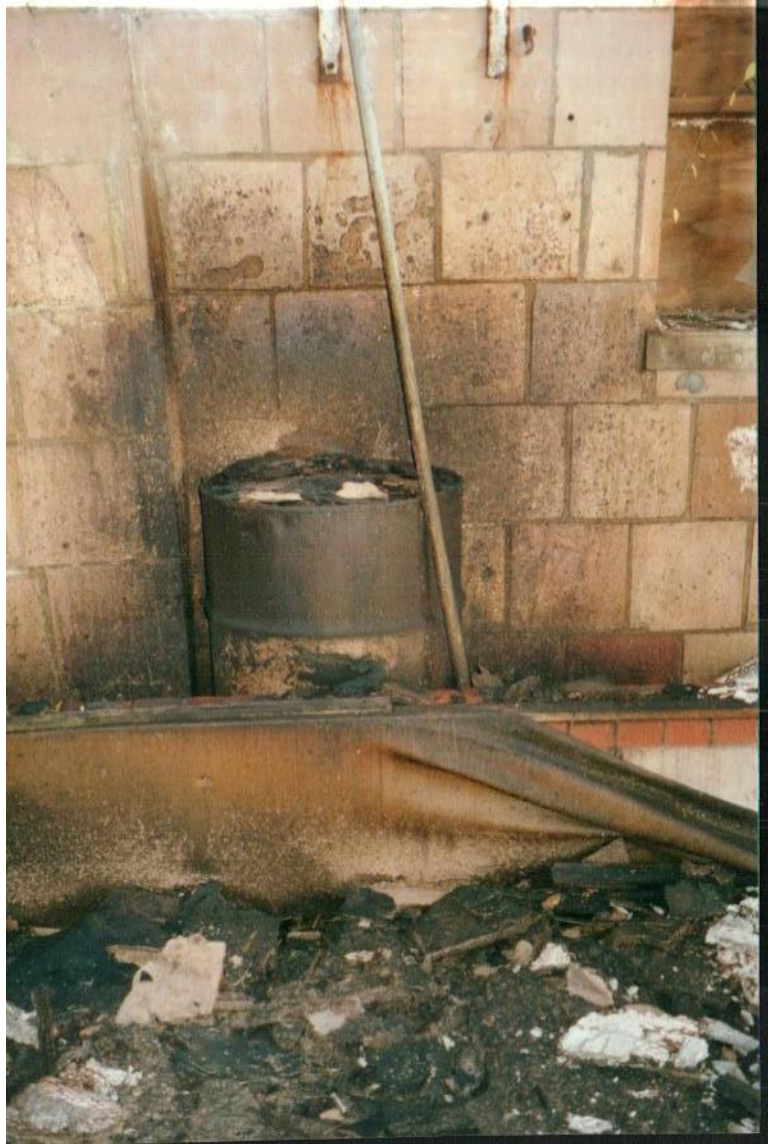
Observations

We discovered that the general public had unrestricted access to many of the aircraft hangers at Floyd Bennett Field. We inspected aircraft hangers identified as numbers 1 and 2. The hangars were not locked or secured in any way, and we did not observe any signs instructing the public not to enter. Both aircraft hangers were in dilapidated condition and presented potential safety risks to the visiting public. Dangerous conditions included:

- Unsafe structural conditions including a partially collapsed roof.

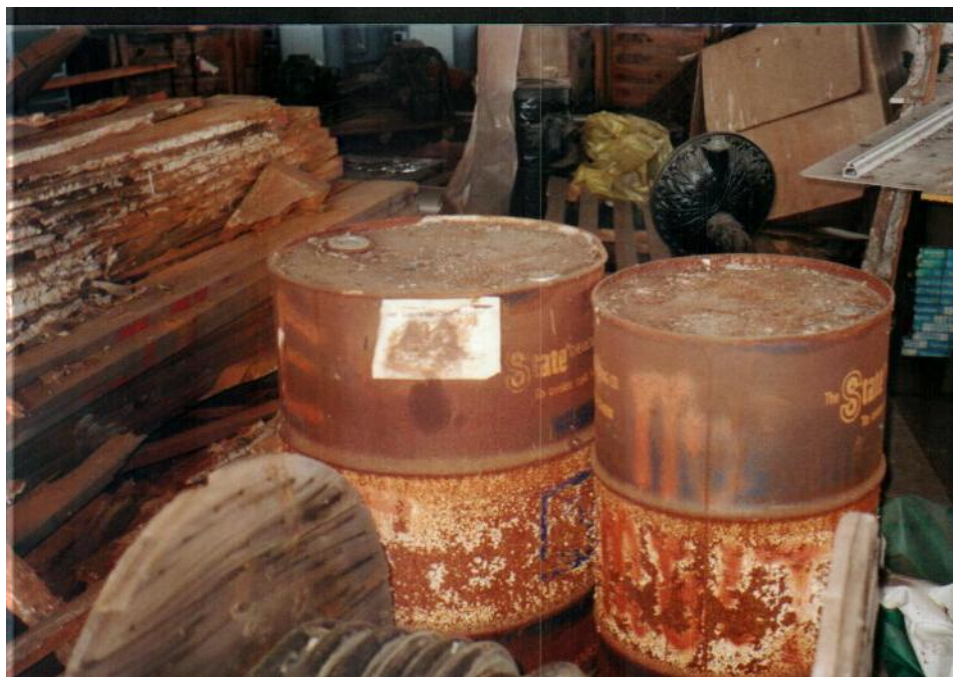


Collapsed Roof



Pieces of Collapsed Roof on Floor and
Unknown Substance in Barrel

- Storage of unsecured machinery, industrial equipment, chemicals, and other unlabeled and unknown substances.



Storage of Equipment and Chemicals

- Uncovered vertical shafts, approximately four to five feet deep, some of which were filled with water, in the concrete floor of both aircraft hangers.

NPS officials advised that these aircraft hangers are included in the Facilities Maintenance Software System with an Asset Priority Index of 36 out of 40 (40 is the highest priority). The officials stated that repairs had not been made to these facilities because funds were not available. Officials could not explain why the facilities were not locked or otherwise secured from the public.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Director, National Park Service, ensure that the Superintendent, Gateway National Recreation Area:

1. Takes immediate steps to prevent public access to all unsafe aircraft hangers at Floyd Bennett Field.
2. Conducts an inspection of all facilities at Floyd Bennett Field to identify any additional facilities presenting a safety risk to the public and take action to prevent access to these facilities.

We discussed these conditions with NPS officials at the time of our visit and provided additional information during a November 10, 2004 teleconference. The Superintendent agreed that immediate action was needed to safeguard the public from these safety hazards.

Please provide us with your written comments to this report and a summary of actions taken or planned by December 20, 2004. Please address your response to:

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If you have any comments or questions regarding this report, please call me at (303) 236-9243.