



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Department of Justice Joins Whistleblower Lawsuit Alleging Fraud Against Hanford Contractor

Whistleblower alleges Hanford contractor engaged in fraud by failing to effectively manage fire systems maintenance personnel and related work activities

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Seattle, WA: After a thorough investigation, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has filed their own complaint partially intervening in a fraud case filed by Hanford worker Bradley Keever against Hanford Mission Integration Solutions (“HMIS”). Mr. Keever has worked at the Hanford site since 2009 and on fire systems maintenance at Hanford since 2017. Mr. Keever is represented by legal counsel at [Smith & Lowney, Mehri & Skalet](#), and [Hanford Challenge](#).

Mr. Keever’s [Complaint](#), filed under seal on December 15, 2021 and just made public by the court, alleges that Hanford contractors, HMIS and Mission Support Alliance (“MSA”), defrauded the government by failing to effectively manage fire systems maintenance personnel and work activities. This failure resulted in HMIS and MSA workers being instructed to charge the government for a full day's work regardless of excessive idle time and nonwork-related activities for fire system maintenance crews that went uncorrected by HMIS or MSA.

Richard Condit, of Mehri & Skalet, said, "The False Claims Act is the government’s most powerful tool to combat fraud, and incentivizes those who "see something" to "say something." We are proud to represent Mr. Keever and to partner with the U.S. government to return stolen dollars to the federal government and to protect the Hanford facility from the pervasive culture of fraud that has developed there."

Nikolas Peterson, Executive Director of Hanford Challenge said, “One of the more frustrating aspects of this case is that there is a highly trained workforce ready and willing to do this maintenance, but management is getting in the way of letting them do this essential work.”

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (“DNFSB”) has also recently looked at concerns related to fire safety systems and maintenance at Hanford and validated many of Mr. Keever’s allegations. In 2023 reports, the DNFSB reported excess sediment and corrosion in pipes and clogged fire sprinklers. The

DNFSB also reported that the fire protection safety management program failed to ensure operability of the systems, and that at least one fire suppression system at Hanford was declared inoperable.

Meredith Crafton, of Smith and Lowney, PLLC said “Mr. Keever is an expert in his field and has always been passionate about fire safety systems, especially at Hanford, and it is an honor to represent him. Mr. Keever came to us looking to affect change at Hanford because he believes in the mission they are tasked to complete. It is our hope that this case can contribute to a shift in the culture of fraud within which Hanford contractors have operated for far too long.”

Recently, the DOE awarded only 35% of HMIS’s subjective fee for 2023 (or \$2,946,559 of the \$8,418,739 available). This is much worse than the 80% it received in [2022](#), prior to DOE’s knowledge of the fire suppression system issues. The DOE 2023 [Scorecard](#) asserts that,

HMIS failed to effectively manage fire system maintenance personnel, work activities, and the associated costs. During the performance period, DOE was provided with evidence of numerous occasions when crews assigned to perform fire system maintenance were excessively idle and participated in nonwork-related activities due to ineffective work planning and unproductive work execution that went uncorrected by contractor management.

Peterson concluded, “The failure to perform maintenance on fire systems at Hanford is unacceptable and terrifying. A fire is one of the most likely emergency scenarios at Hanford and could spread chemical and radioactive waste far and wide. We depend on contractors like HMIS to do the job they are paid to do to keep us safe. This case puts into question the billing by contractors for maintenance on every single fire suppression system on the Hanford site.”

The U.S. Department of Energy (“DOE”) contracts with HMIS to provide direct support to DOE and its other contractors with site services that are integral and necessary to accomplish the cleanup mission. According to HMIS’s website, they enable “cleanup by providing Hanford Site Services, including adequate and reliable water, power, road maintenance, information technology, safeguards and security, sitewide safety standards, training and countless more integrated services and deliverables across the Hanford Site.”

Mr. Keever, as a relator to the government in this case, is eligible for a financial reward of between 15 and 25% of the government’s recovery. Several laws protect Mr. Keever should he be retaliated against. Condit added, “no employee should take this journey alone, we’ve got Keever’s back.”

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For Mr. Keever’s complaint, [click here](#).

For U.S. Department of Justice press release, [click here](#).