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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 28, 2011

INVESTIGATION REVEALS SEVERE WALL DETERIORATION OF STATE CAPITOL BUILDING

OKLAHOMA CITY – After small pieces of limestone dislodged from the walls above the columns of the exterior of the state Capitol building, the Department of Central Services (DCS) consulted forensic engineering firm, Zahl-Ford Structural Investigators & Consultants (ZFI). ZFI conducted a structural investigation of the affected areas of the Capitol building and provided a report describing damage detected to exterior limestone panels. Scaffolding has been erected to protect pedestrians from falling debris.

The ZFI report lists several critical issues requiring attention. “The falling debris at the southeast and southwest corners of the south portico is the result of seriously deteriorated mortar joints in the limestone cladding,” the report stated and additionally confirmed, “Given the severity of the deterioration of the mortar joints, the degree of water infiltration that is occurring, and the length of time the problem has likely existed, corrosion of the tie-back clips that hold the limestone veneer against the building at these locations is highly likely.”

Due to serious conditions outlined in the ZFI report, DCS is taking immediate steps to develop a repair and restoration plan. The report also indicates this is not an isolated event. “This condition supports our observation that the problems with deteriorating joints extend beyond the two corners of the south portico. Although we have only investigated the SE corner, this (situation) is indicative of the entire building.”

DCS’s number one concern is public safety and as a result, precautionary measures have been expanded to protect pedestrians. Based on findings within the report, the safety zone on the south side of the Capitol has been widened and barriers placed in front of the south staircase. Since there is still potential for pieces of limestone and grout to fall from the building, scaffolding over the handicap entrance has been erected to serve as a debris shield.

DCS Director, John Richard, attributes the problem to the age of the capitol building and the extremes of Oklahoma weather. “This deterioration has been steadily progressing. Without urgent attention, the current situation will rapidly worsen over time,” he said. Based on available resources, DCS is currently exploring options on ways to proceed. “Now that we have the analysis of the situation we will need to plan a course of action,” said Richard. “Without additional resources, we may only be able to make patch repairs.” Meanwhile, the debris shield and barriers around the staircase will remain in place until temporary or permanent repairs are completed.

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