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Files piled up at VA's Roanoke Regional Office.

VA FILES AT ROANOKE REGIONAL OFFICE COULD COLLAPSE BUILDING

The backlog of VA claims files is so great that it is compromising the structural integrity of the building.

NOTE from Larry Scott, VA Watchdog dot Org ... The VAOIG report on the Roanoke Regional Office is here ...

<http://www.vawatchdog.org/10/nf10/nfjan10/nf011510-4.htm>

Be sure to watch the video of this story using the embedded player at the bottom of the page.

Backlog of veteran files could cause collapse at Roanoke's Poff Building

By Angela Hatcher | WSL10 Reporter/Anchor

http://www2.ws10.com/sls/news/local/article/backlog_of_veteran_files_could_causeCollapse_at_roanokes_poff_building/75802/

The problem is literally from floor to ceiling inside Roanoke's Poff Federal Building. According to a report uncovered by our Lynchburg newsroom the News and Advance, nearly 11,000 folders were found sitting on top of full file cabinets. That was during an inspection between August 25 and September 2.

In the report by the Va's Inspector General, an engineer states the load on floors 10, 11 and 12 of the 14 story building is double what is considered safe. The load was determined to be 160 pounds per square foot, twice the 80 pounds per square foot recommended limit.

That's heavy enough to cause a potential collapse. The engineer mentions the possibility of structural damage that would threaten the safety of the

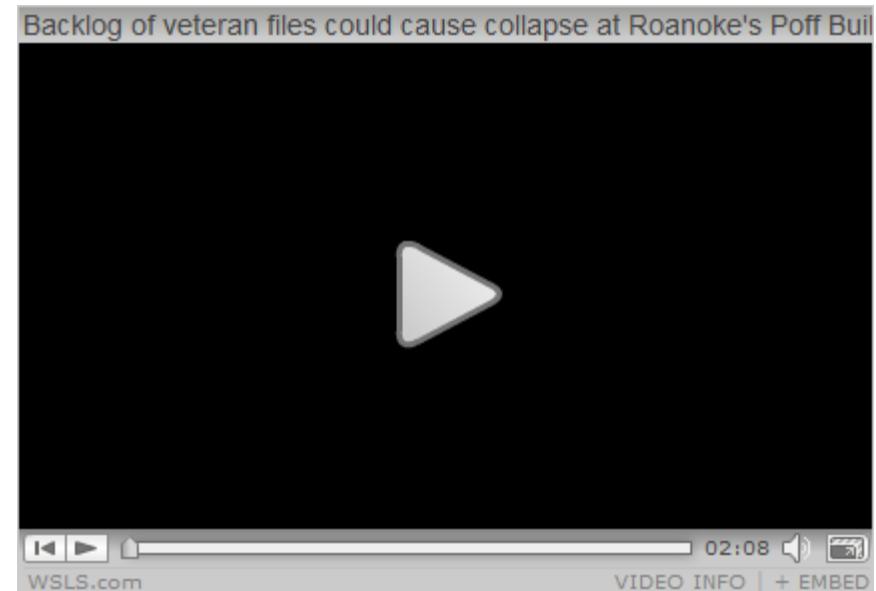
building and people inside.

"It's just outrageous. We've got to deal with this backlog.", says Rep. Tom Perriello. As a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Congressman Perriello demanded this inspection. "We're certainly upping the inspections.", says Perriello.

The Inspector General's office told us on the phone they hope to get the VA regional office inspections on the same timetable as VA hospitals, every three years. A spokeswoman tells us this was not a surprise inspection, but was on very short notice.

The U.S. General Services Administration oversees the upkeep of federal properties including the Poff Building. When we called the administration's Philadelphia Headquarters to ask for an interview about the structural risk found in Roanoke, we were referred to an office inside the Poff Building. When we called there, we were referred back to Philadelphia. Our request was eventually denied.

Roanoke office director William Nicholas responded to the Inspector General on December 30. Nicholas said 40 to 60 percent of the file cabinets would be moved from the Poff Building to an off-site storage facility, available in 60 days. The Inspector General spokeswoman says that's likely 60 days from the date of his response. We do not know if that process is underway, as the VA did not return our calls for comment.



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