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City of Downey

Press Release

SLOW NEWS DAY BRINGS UP OLD ISSUE

Claims linking illness to Downey Studios make headlines . . . again.

Downey, CA, August 4, 2009: Mayor Mario A. Guerra laughed as he once again read a news story published over the weekend rehashing the dated claim that film workers became sick as a result of working at the Downey Studios. His laughter was soon followed by frustration, but ultimately the Mayor understood that newspapers are in the business of selling papers, even on slow news days.

At issue is a claim made by several dozen film production workers that working at the site made them sick. "The facts just don't support the claims made by these workers," the Mayor indicated when asked about the story. To date, no judgments or findings have supported the claims made by the workers. In fact, the only significant outcome resulting from these claims was in favor of the site's current owner. The union, which was representing the workers when the claims were originally filed, and its insurer, paid \$775,000 to settle a libel suit filed against them by the owner. The suit contended that the union scared away business by falsely claiming in its newsletter that Downey Studios was unsafe.

The Mayor also reminded us, "The City of Downey along with our partners, the National Aeronautics & Space Administration (NASA), United States General Services Administration, and International Risk Group, received the Phoenix Award for the revitalization of the site." "We are proud to honor your group who, with all its hard work, used innovative and creative techniques to revitalize blighted, contaminated lands to a productive, new use," wrote the Phoenix Awards Executive Committee in the letter congratulating the City. Created in 1997, this prestigious environmental award honors individuals and groups who are working to solve the critical environmental issue of transforming abandoned industrial areas into productive new uses and was presented to the City of Downey by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Wayne Nasti.

"Would a reasonable person believe the site was unsafe when hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in the site?" asked the Mayor. Several major developments have been made on the site since the site was closed in the late nineties. "Do you think Kaiser built a 700 million dollar hospital without doing their homework?" the Mayor goes on to question. He followed up by stating, "The Downey Landing was not only built, but was recently sold. Again I have to think the representatives in charge of these decisions did their homework." The Mayor concluded his comments by stating, "Slow news days happen; I would just hope in the future the canned stories are removed from the shelves once they pass their expiration date."



For Immediate Release