

N E W S L I N E

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Update on DWC Santa Barbara Satellite Office Conference Scheduling

On January 13, the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) began operations at a satellite to the Oxnard District Office, located at 411 East Canon Perdido in Santa Barbara. The Santa Barbara satellite was opened in order to continue service to the population formerly served by the Goleta District Office, which was closed last December in an effort to consolidate and conserve State resources.

While the Santa Barbara satellite was welcomed for making DWC service locally accessible, the Division has been made aware that the current space cannot accommodate the volume of users. The size of the lobby, hearing room and available parking is particularly insufficient for all parties on conference days, and the crowding is negatively impacting other tenants in the facility. An increase in tenant complaints over the last few weeks have made it clear that the Division must take immediate measures to reduce its impact on the shared facility space.

Therefore, beginning on Monday, March 3 all conferences that would have taken place in Santa Barbara will be scheduled on Mondays in Oxnard. The Oxnard District Office, located approximately 38 miles to the south of Santa Barbara, has ample room for all case participants in a typical conference calendar. Recognizing that some applicants may have difficulty travelling to Oxnard, the Division encourages use of Court Call in lieu of personal appearance for attorneys who represent applicants in the Santa Barbara area. DWC will also explore alternatives for unrepresented injured workers, which may include a telephone appearance option to be facilitated by DWC's Information and Assistance staff.

The Santa Barbara satellite will continue to be used for a limited number of trials and expedited hearings held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. There will be no hearings scheduled on Fridays, which are termed a "dark day," set aside for judges to work on their decisions. The Information and Assistance Office in Santa Barbara will stay open five days a week.

DWC is actively pursuing a more spacious satellite location in the greater Santa Barbara area, as to remain accessible to those who had frequented the Goleta District Office. “The Division remains committed to serving the County of Santa Barbara,” affirmed Christine Baker, Director of Industrial Relations. “In the meantime, we appreciate the community’s patience while we continue to seek a sustainable presence in the area.”

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