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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
Washington, DC 20548

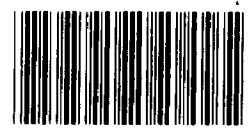
FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY
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(E) STATEMENT OF
MORTON HENIG, SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY
AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON
[THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S
PROBLEMS WITH FIELD OFFICE SPACE]

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Messrs. Chairmen and Members of the Committee, we are here today at your request to discuss our work directed at SSA field office space and conditions in field offices that might hinder SSA's mission and public service. We undertook this work in response to your request of October 31, 1979. My prepared testimony this morning will be along the following sequence. First, we will discuss the purpose of the SSA field offices; next, the type of environment that I believe most people would expect to find in an SSA field office; then, the condition of those field offices as testified to numerous times by SSA management and as we found in our work, after that we will talk about the reasons for this undesirable condition existing; and last, what we think could be done to alleviate the problem.

PURPOSE OF FIELD OFFICES

SSA administers programs which provide benefits to the Nation's aged, blind, and disabled and to their dependents and survivors. To serve them, SSA established a network of about 1,350 field offices located around the United States and its territories. The offices vary in size from about 12 to over 200 employees.

The field office operation, which employs about 40 000 people, is vital to the successful administration of SSA's programs. According to estimates from SSA personnel, in fiscal year 1979, the field offices were visited about 22 million times by people filing claims, providing information related to their claim or benefits, desiring a social security number or replacement, or requesting information about SSA's programs and their entitlement. In fiscal year 1979, it cost about \$813 million for the field office operation; of that amount, field office space cost about \$56 million.

In order to obtain and maintain the office space required for its field office operation, SSA depends not only on the efforts of its own people, but on personnel in the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), formerly the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. DLG 04662

SSA'S CONCERNS

Over the past 4 years, SSA's concerns regarding field office space have been expressed at SSA's appropriation hearings in the Senate and House. At the fiscal year 1980 appropriation hearings in the Senate, SSA Commissioner Ross stated, "We have had a continued backlogging of our

requests for increased space or just minor leasehold improvements... Our problems are nationwide in this area including a number of cases where it isn't a matter of just overcrowding, but we have offices which just do not permit elderly or handicapped claimants to get the kind of service they should."

An SSA report provided to the House Appropriations Committee during the fiscal year 1980 hearings stated that, "GSA performance, seldom fully satisfactory, has deteriorated in the past few years to the point where it is now almost completely unresponsive in meeting the space needs of the Social Security public contact offices throughout the country. The situation has reached the point of a scandal. It must be corrected." SSA Commissioner Ross, in commenting on the report and SSA's problems, stated, "I really think it has reached the point where Congress itself ought to look into this, because it seems to me that there is no question that it affects the level of our service to the public. The quality of our service is affected by our inability to give these vulnerable people whom the program serves, the courteous treatment they require in a dignified, refined atmosphere. I just think the whole concept of social service is service

to the public. Good space appropriate space, is absolutely essential to carry out the function.

CONDITIONS ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

What should offices used by SSA to serve the public be like? We doubt that anyone would quarrel with the concept that they should provide privacy and a dignified professional environment. They should have adequate waiting areas and restroom facilities and be free from excessive noise, distractions, and safety hazards. The office should also be clean and well-maintained. They should be accessible to handicapped persons and located in neighborhoods that are closest to most of the population being served. The location should permit the elderly and disabled to reach the office by private or public transportation with minimum difficulty.

Many of SSA's field offices do not meet these expected conditions in one way or another. About half of the field offices need improved space. Some need to be expanded, relocated, or a new office established because they are overcrowded or have poor office conditions. Others need improvements to make them fully accessible to handicapped people.

The following conditions were noted in varying degrees and combinations in the offices we visited. Because the offices were not selected as a representative sample the findings cannot be projected to all 1,350 field offices.

No Privacy During Interviews

In the 11 field offices we visited, interviews were generally not private conversations. Because of an SSA policy, field offices are generally of an open area configuration and interviews are generally conducted at desks that do not have acoustical barriers between them. In addition, 3 studies done for SSA have noted that the interview in field offices can be overheard by people nearby. Photograph 1 shows the interior of a field office. Note the open interview area that is typical of SSA's office.

Photograph 1

An open interviewing area typical of SSA field offices.

The next photographs shows that only a few feet separate one interviewee from another. The desk in the foreground is for interviewing also. Therefore, anyone sitting alongside or behind the interviewee may overhear personal conversations. The privacy problem tends to be greater when an office is overcrowded; in this office, we noted that people in the

waiting areas could overhear the interviews. This office has been waiting for better space since March 1974.

Photograph 2

Only a few feet separate people being interviewed and accommodations for privacy are lacking. The waiting area is in the background of this photograph.

By way of contrast, the next two photographs show that private interviews are provided to the public when similar personal data is obtained in this Los Angeles County welfare office. The workload in this office is predominately Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a program administered by local governments for SSA.

Photograph 3

Interviewing area showing the private booths used at the Los Angeles County welfare office.

Photograph 4

Uncluttered and private booth for interviews provide a dignified professional environment to the public.

At SSA's fiscal year 1979 budget hearings in the House, Acting Commissioner Wortman stated, "I think it is difficult for an American citizen to go into our offices and have a private conversation." Although, SSA has not initiated agency-wide action to revise its open area configuration policy for field offices to provide more privacy while conducting interviews, it should be noted that one region has made independent efforts to improve privacy in a few field offices.

Inadequate Public Waiting Areas

In 6 of the 11 offices we visited, the public waiting area was too small or lacked adequate restroom facilities. For example, one office manager stated that the office was recently relocated over his objection, into space where the waiting area is too small. As a result, during the day up to 40 people may have to wait in the conference room or outside the office. During peak periods, 80 to 120 people may wait outside the office at sometime during the day. About 500 people visit this office daily. Several of the offices we visited either lacked adequate restroom facilities for the number of people using it or the restrooms were not adjacent to the waiting area.

Noisy and Distractive Environment

In most of the offices we visited, it was our impression that the ability of an office to maintain a dignified professional environment is eroded by noise from office equipment, by the close proximity of other interviews, by distractions from people moving about, and by outbursts from children or interviewees in the office. The studies related to interviewing in field offices have also commented about the noise and distractions and the probable adverse effect on the interview. One study pointed out that closeness heightens the emotions of the interview situation.

At the 10 overcrowded offices we visited, employees and desks were squeezed into the office in order to handle a growing workload. At one office, 28 employees were working in space designed for 13 people. The crowding seemed to make normal traffic in the office distracting for the public and employees. The next photograph shows the inadequate space. The public waiting area is in the front and the restrooms are in the rear of the building. The public and employees going to and from the restrooms cause distractions because they pass through the interviewing area. This office has been waiting for improved space since March 1977.

Photograph 5

Traffic in this office uses the aisle in the middle of the photograph; the view is to the front of the office. The pole next to the man on the right supports the roof.

Safety and Housekeeping Problems Exist

In almost every office we visited, SSA personnel pointed out conditions they viewed as safety hazards. For example, photograph number 5 also shows that one of several poles that support the roof of this office is in the interview area. An office employee stated that one elderly man when leaving the interview, was momentarily stunned when he hit the pole with his head. In another incident at this office, a woman suffered

an epileptic seizure. However, emergency medical care was delayed because people and furniture in the overcrowded office had to be moved before a stretcher and medical equipment could get through the office.

The next photograph shows the size and location of a 1/4 inch depression in the floor. The manager stated that, although warned about the hazard, people have stumbled on the uneven floor surface.

Photograph 6

The white circle in the foreground of this photograph shows the location and size of a depression in the floor of the office.

Other hazards observed in the field office include the location of electric and telephone wires as well as supplies stacked in hallways because of inadequate space. We noted that when additional people and furniture are squeezed into an office designed for a smaller workforce, the location of electric and telephone outlets often seems to be a problem because they were not moved when furniture was rearranged.

The American Federation of Government Employees cited one office as hazardous because of exposed wiring, leaky gas pipes, and insects and rodents. This same office was

also cited by the fire department as having an electrical wiring fire hazard. Generally, the obvious hazards tended to detract from the professional image of the office. The next 7 photographs show some of the conditions we saw.

Photograph 7

Tangled electrical and telephone wires present a hazard to SSA employees and could be seen by the public.

Photograph 8

The arrow points to a hole in the floor from which wires emerge. According to SSA the castor on the employees chair frequently drops into the hole.

Photograph 9

Hazardous outlets and telephone cord.

Photograph 10

Outlet wiring in the aisle presents a hazard to the public and employees.

Photograph 11

Unsightly wiring next to an employee's work station.

Photograph 12

Boxes of office supplies stacked in the hallway.

Photograph 13

Boxes of office supplies stacked in the aisle.

Employees have filed grievances through their unions against the conditions in at least 2 of the 11 offices we

visited. They were seeking administrative leave until insects and rodent infestations, health and safety violations, and poor custodial services are remedied. At one office, the manager told us an employee was bitten by a spider, became ill, and was off work for 1-1/2 days. At 4 offices, employees complained fleas infested the carpets and the monthly spraying does not eliminate them. SSA personnel at a few offices pointed out holes in the floor or wall that are used by insects and rodents to enter the office.

Offices also have problems with air conditioning. One district office manager stated that during excessively hot days, the air-conditioning system has gone off making the office intolerable. According to the manager, when the air conditioning has been down, temperatures have reached the high 90's. At many field offices we heard complaints about poor custodial services, such as dirty restrooms, floors, walls, and light fixtures, which are responsibilities of the landlord and GSA to remedy. At some field offices, we were told the office does not comply with local fire codes.

The next 6 photographs illustrate office conditions that trigger complaints from the employees working in the office and may adversely affect their morale.

Photograph 14

Employees are crowded together and lack adequate workspace.

Photograph 15

SSA manuals are stored under the desk in space intended for the employee's feet.

Photograph 16

Employees are crowded together and disturb one another when they move, talk on the phone, use the typewriter, etc.

Photograph 17

Hole in the floor used for access to wiring. According to the office manager, insects may enter the office through such openings.

Photograph 18

Hole in the wall for wiring. According to the office manager insects enter the office through such openings.

Photograph 19

Hole in the wall for plumbing. According to the office manager insects and rodents enter the office through the hole. The landlord failed to close the opening after installing the sink.

Unnecessary Management and Operating Problems

SSA managers stated that for an efficient operation and convenient public access, the office space ought to be contiguous, rectangular, and on the ground floor. In one way or another many of the offices we visited did not meet these criteria.

Offices that are not on the ground floor may not provide convenient public access for the elderly and handicapped. At SSA's fiscal year 1978 appropriation hearings in the House, Commissioner Cardwell stated, "Often we are on the second or third floor of a building, although we are dealing with elderly or disabled people. This does not make sense. Almost always there are elevators. Even so, for many aged and disabled claimants, the fact that the office is not at ground level can have a psychological effect as well as cause physical problems."

Handicapped Standards Not Met

SSA estimates that about 1/3 of its workload involves the disabled and yet over 25 percent of SSA's 1,350 offices are not fully accessible to the handicapped. Some offices lack aisles that are wide enough for a wheelchair and some offices also lack restroom facilities that meet the requirements of the handicapped. We visited several offices where it would not be feasible to serve or employ the handicapped because of overcrowding or inadequate facilities.

SSA's fiscal year 1980 budget submission requested \$4 million to begin the process of upgrading its facilities for access by the handicapped. SSA will have to work with

GSA for the work needed to bring 339 field offices identified thus far up to the minimum standards.

SSA'S SPACE PROBLEMS ARE CHRONIC

Why do overcrowding and the other office environment problems occur? Some external factors, such as funding limitations were responsible for the continued existence of poor office conditions. However, the fault also lies, in part, with the process that had been used to acquire and manage space. Put simply, the process did not provide timely results that satisfied SSA's need for space that arose from the rapid growth in the number field office employees after the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program began in 1974. We define the process to acquire space as including all the functions from the determination of a need for improved office space until SSA occupies suitable space.

In February 1978, we reported to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare, House Committee on Appropriations, on SSA's problems with office space. We reported that many of the space problems experienced by SSA were attributable to delays in leasing space for office expansion or relocation, overcrowding and overuse of offices, and inadequate services. Disagreements sometimes arose over the location of offices and implementation of Government

policy. In that report we concluded that GSA's performance in acquiring space could be improved. According to an SSA official, little improvement has occurred since then.

On February 22, 1977, GSA began an accelerated leasing process of requests for space less than 2,500 square feet and set a 60-day goal for delivery. SSA reported at its 1980 appropriations hearings that in 1977 GSA used the process to complete action on 23 SSA offices (10 for temporary space) and the processing time averaged 5.8 months. In April 1978, the procedure was expanded to include space requests up to 5,000 square feet. Although 70 percent of SSA's space requests are under 5,000 square feet, SSA reported then that none of its offices had benefited from the accelerated leasing process.

Completed Space Requests

We asked SSA for data showing how long offices waited for a request for expanded, relocated, or new office space to be satisfied. SSA lacked this data for all offices during the last 3 years, but 7 of SSA's 10 regional offices did furnish information on 190 offices. These offices waited an average of about 17 months before their requests were satisfied. Some offices waited only a few months and several others up to 5 years.

Pending Space Requests

In addition, we asked SSA for data showing how long field offices had been waiting as of August 31, 1979, for expanded, relocated, or new office space. SSA provided data for 239 district and branch offices which showed they had been waiting an average of 22 months for GSA to satisfy their requests. Some offices have been waiting for about 6 months and others up to 5 years.

Overall, SSA data show that almost half of the field offices need improved space. They need either expanded, relocated, or new office space or work to make them fully accessible to the handicapped.

EXTERNAL FACTORS LIMITING GSA'S/ABILITY TO SATISFY SSA'S NEEDS

GSA personnel said inadequate funding and staffing and leasing moratoriums and policy decisions are factors beyond their control, that have limited their ability to satisfy Federal agencies, including SSA's, need for office space. These factors, singly or in any combination, have tended to stall GSA's actions on space requests. According to a GSA official, these factors are history; now, GSA is in a better position to satisfy agency space needs.

Inadequate Funding

GSA personnel stated that for the past several years there has not been enough money in GSA's budget to fully meet the

needs of all the agencies for office space. In fiscal year 1979, there was little money for additional space.

GSA charges the agencies for space. However, the total amount of money appropriated to the individual agencies to pay GSA has been greater than the amount GSA was allowed to spend.

On October 29, 1979, a GSA memorandum, to its regional administrators advised them that funding was sufficient to satisfy 30 to 50 percent of all agencies' additional space needs in fiscal year 1980 and expected funds to satisfy the remainder by the end of fiscal year 1981. Thus, to the extent that GSA funding problems contribute to the SSA space situation, some relief may be in sight.

Inadequate Staffing

At GSA we were told that a shortage and turnover of staff have also contributed to the backlog of space requests. Personnel at one region explained that because of high turnover, the region has vacancies or trainees instead of experienced staff and this has limited GSA's ability to satisfy SSA's needs.

GSA plans to hire additional personnel for its leasing operations. In anticipation of a higher funding level, 38 new leasing officers were authorized for the GSA regional offices. However, as of May 1, 1980, a GSA space management official could not tell us how many people have been hired by the

regions or the effect of the current hiring restrictions on GSA's operations.

Moratoriums and Policy Decisions

GSA personnel stated that, over the past several years, leasing moratoriums and policy decisions have made it difficult to provide space in a timely manner. The moratoriums and policy decisions disrupt the process to acquire space, and may require beginning all over again on a request for space on which a substantial amount of work has been done.

Will the GSA-HHS Plan Meet SSA'S Needs?

House of Representatives Report No. 92-244, dated June 7, 1979, asked OMB and GSA to develop a plan to meet SSA's needs for field office space. GSA and HHS proposed a plan, without SSA's involvement, which stated that with additional funding and personnel and with some procedural changes, GSA can satisfy SSA's need for office space without further need for OMB or congressional involvement. GSA officials informed us that it was up to their regions to implement the plan and hire people as needed.

According to HHS and GSA officials, GSA has promised to satisfy 30 to 50 percent of SSA's current backlog in fiscal year 1980 and eliminate the backlog by the end of fiscal year 1981. Our review of SSA's latest progress reports indicates that through April 1, 1980, GSA has reduced about 12 percent of the December 1979 backlog of 392 space requests. A GSA

official told us that he is confident the plan will work. The relatively low percentage of the space needs cleared by April 1980 is the result of the many step space acquisition process. Many transactions which were underway in the first 6 months will soon become final and GSA believes it will be able to provide at least the 30 percent goal. However, SSA submitted an even greater number of new requests since then so that the backlog was greater after 6 months of effort under the new plan. It appears that even though GSA met its commitment, SSA could end the fiscal year without a significant decrease in the size of its backlog because of new requests for improved space.

Although the plan addresses the funding and staffing factors that have limited GSA, it does not deal with the fact that GSA's objectives and priorities often override SSA's needs. In addition our work showed that more people are involved in the process than seems necessary, and the plan would not address this issue.

GSA Interests Override SSA's Needs

A GSA official told us that, in addition to providing space that satisfies agencies' requests, GSA performs regulatory functions to keep agencies in check and it implements Government policies regarding office space. However, according to HHS officials and examples provided by SSA, GSA does not give adequate consideration to agencies' program needs. When there is a conflict, GSA's objectives

generally override SSA's program needs.

For example, GSA usually limited the size of an office to accommodate only the current staff. When SSA was growing rapidly in the mid-70's, due to the SSI program, the amount of field office space provided by GSA was usually limited to current staffing at the time of the request. However, SSA's field office staffing continued to increase and as a result, some offices were overcrowded within a few years after SSA occupied the space. SSA would then request more space. If the office could be expanded GSA generally provided the space. However, GSA appears to be reluctant to act if satisfying SSA's need for space required terminating a lease even though the standard lease has a provision for termination. According to GSA personnel, GSA has a practice of not breaking leases. Consequently, some overcrowded offices had to wait until the lease was about to expire before GSA would seek additional space. When the leases began to expire in the late 1970's, the previously discussed moratoriums and policy decisions further delayed relief from the overcrowding.

Another example involves GSA's implementation of the President's national urban policy, which calls for locating agencies in distressed areas of cities, generally considered by GSA to be the central business district. Although the implementation instructions cite SSA field offices as an example where the policy may be waived if it has an adverse

effect on the agency's mission, the examples provided to us by SSA indicated that GSA generally took a less flexible approach and allowed few exceptions. According to GSA personnel, competition is limited to the central business district area because if comparable space outside the central business district area was offered at a lower price, GSA would be obliged to accept it and this would frustrate implementing the urban policy.

As a result, some field offices were moved into locations that SSA officials opposed because of the higher cost and adverse effect on SSA's mission. We were told that GSA has revised its central business district policy to include consideration of cost and certain intangible factors in its decisions on location of an office.

According to SSA field office managers, implementing an efficient office layout can be a difficult task when the configuration of the space severely limits how it can be used. According to SSA central office personnel, when GSA leases space, it has minimal concern for the configuration of the space. In SSA's view, GSA objects to seeking a specific space configuration because it limits competition.

Overlapping and Duplicative Functions Exist

There are probably more people involved in the process to acquire space than are necessary. In addition to the field office manager and the SSA area director--who supervises

a number of field offices, personnel in the SSA, HHS, and GSA regional offices are involved in the process. The process is redundant and multiple reviews by SSA and HHS regional staff do not seem to add much value to the final outcome.

SSA's role

The SSA field office manager generally does the forecasting and planning for the office and service area as the need arises. The office manager initiates the initial request for space and usually develops the office layout and workflow and determines where partitions, desks, telephone and electrical outlets will be.

SSA's regional offices have staff responsible for managing the field office facilities. They generally serve as a middle-man between the SSA field office managers and area directors and the HHS Regional Operations for Facilities Engineering and Construction (ROFEC). The SSA regional staff generally (1) maintains files on field facilities throughout the region; (2) communicates SSA's office space needs and concerns to ROFEC; (3) reviews the office manager's request for space, which has already been approved by the area director, and question, change, or concur with the request before passing it on to the ROFEC; and (4) depending upon the availability of staff and travel money, inspect the space offered for field office use and concur in its suitability.

HHS's role

HHS established ROFEC, whose responsibility is to view space requests from a facility instead of a programmatic standpoint. Currently, the ROFEC generally processes space requests and inspection tasks that tend to duplicate those performed by SSA and GSA. SSA regional officials have stated that ROFEC is an unnecessary link in communicating with GSA and its contribution to a satisfactory outcome in the process for acquiring field office space is minimal. ROFEC personnel stated that they are understaffed and as a result, some responsibilities, such as facilities' inspections and designing office layouts are unfulfilled.

SHOULD SSA HAVE DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO ACQUIRE FIELD OFFICE SPACE?

The information presented thus far points out some of the obstacles to the timely satisfaction of SSA's need for suitable field office space. Many of those problems may or may not be solved under the previously mentioned plan. At this time, some progress is being made, but its too early to tell what the final outcome will be. SSA has proposed to GSA that SSA be delegated authority to acquire field office space. Would this move cure the problems? Although there is no tangible evidence that SSA could do a better job than GSA, we think the following factors indicate that delegated authority should be considered.

The field office manager has the greatest interest in the outcome from the process to acquire field office space, is accountable for the overall office performance, and is responsible for good public service and an efficient and effective operation. The office manager makes a significant contribution in the process to acquire space. In addition, SSA has had the money to pay for the additional space it needs, has shown that it can find people to handle problems of concern to SSA by the detail of about 35 people to help with the work in GSA regional offices in 1979, and would probably be expected to interpret Government policy regarding office space in a manner more consistent with SSA's mission and operating needs. Furthermore, delegating leasing authority to SSA would reduce the number of participants involved in the acquisition process, free resources in HHS and GSA for better service to others, and promote accountability for the results of the acquisition process.

SSA Has Requested GSA To Delegate
Leasing Authority

Despite GSA's inability to timely satisfy SSA's needs, GSA has refused on at least 3 occasions, in the past few years, to delegate leasing authority requested by SSA. According to a GSA official, the Congress established GSA as the single leasing authority in the Government, and gave it

responsibility for all office space matters. This official said that SSA has not demonstrated adequate reasons why it should be exempt from overall Government policies regarding office space that are implemented through GSA. He also said that SSA lacks the experienced staff for leasing space.

At the fiscal year 1980 budget hearings, SSA Commissioner Ross stated, "The volume of requests we have pending is such that I would be happy to train our own people to do it. There are no economies of scale that I can see beyond the scale that we are dealing on. If we could get some sort of delegation of authority to deal with space requests of 5,000 feet or less, we could clear up maybe 70 to 80 percent of this problem in relatively rapid order and leave the big ones for GSA."

SSA officials do not have a current estimate of the number of people or cost to properly perform the functions associated with acquiring field office space. An SSA official stated that from a management viewpoint, the effort required to lease field office space is about the same whether the space is 2,500 or 25,000 square feet. However, SSA asked GSA for limited leasing authority because of GSA's past refusal to delegate.

SSA officials state that with regard to economies of scale, almost 1/5 of the leases for field offices expire annually and need to be renewed or relocated. In addition,

SSA has over 2,800 public contact stations that are generally small, in remote areas, and used only a few hours a week.

In January 1978 we reported to the Administrator of GSA, that agencies were refused delegated leasing authority even though GSA could not lease space for all of them in a timely manner. We recommended that GSA adopt a more flexible approach on lease delegations which would consider the most economical and efficient acquisition procedure and the best use of its staff. We also recommended that GSA assume a more active and supportive role in monitoring Federal agencies' leasing practices and procedures.

It is interesting to note that direct leasing authority has been delegated to the Department of Defense for the Armed Forces Recruiting activities. Space for the recruiters is primarily special purpose in nature and satisfaction of these demands consumed time and financial resources out of proportion to their share of the GSA inventory. GSA has recently delegated more leasing authority to the Department of Agriculture. According to a GSA official, both agencies have prior experience in leasing space under prior arrangements with GSA. Also, the delegations put GSA in a better position to serve the needs of other agencies.

Landlord maintenance inadequacies is another problem which could be mitigated if SSA had more direct authority to obtain its space needs. GSA officials state that managing Federal office space is their responsibility and generally have resisted giving SSA a copy of the lease it negotiated with the landlord. SSA officials complain that this disadvantages them and the Government because without knowledge of the terms of the lease SSA's field office manager does not know whether the landlord is fulfilling his responsibilities and doing what he is being paid for. A GSA official recently told us that GSA is changing its policy and tenants can see the complete lease by asking the GSA building manager. Because SSA personnel must work in the office space, they would seem to have the greatest incentive for enforcing landlord compliance with the terms of the lease.

One thing that must be kept in mind as we consider what course of action should be taken is the fact that the backlog is there now and will probably not get cleared any quicker if SSA had the delegated authority tomorrow. SSA would not have the trained staff to handle the problem for quite some time. If Delegation is to be considered, it should be viewed on the basis of whether it will be the most efficient and

economical way of dealing with SSA's long term space needs, rather than on the basis of such action quickly overcoming the existing backlog problem.

This concludes our statement. We will be happy to answer any questions you or other Members may have at this time.

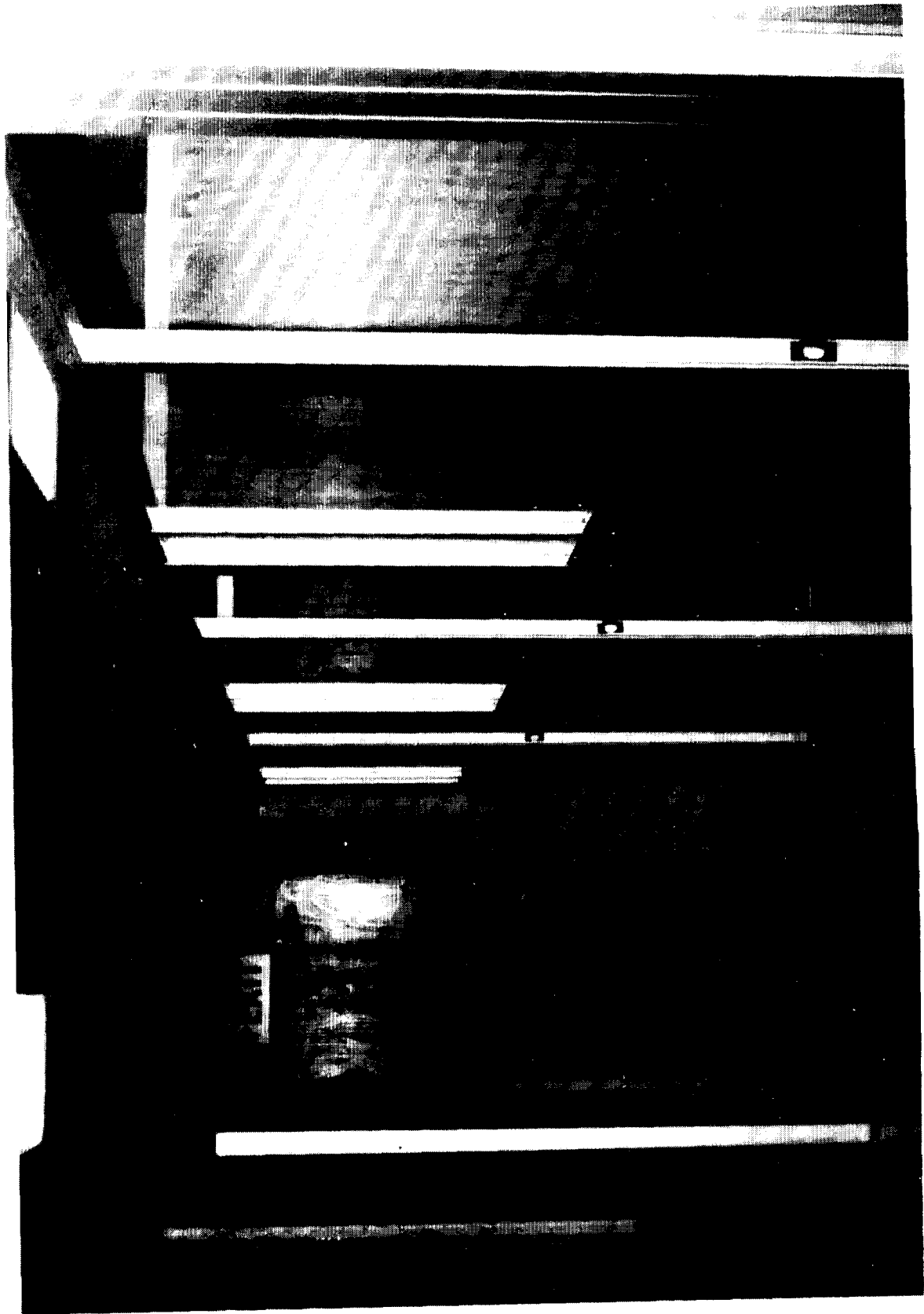


OPEN INTERVIEWING AREA TYPICAL OF SSA FIELD OFFICES.

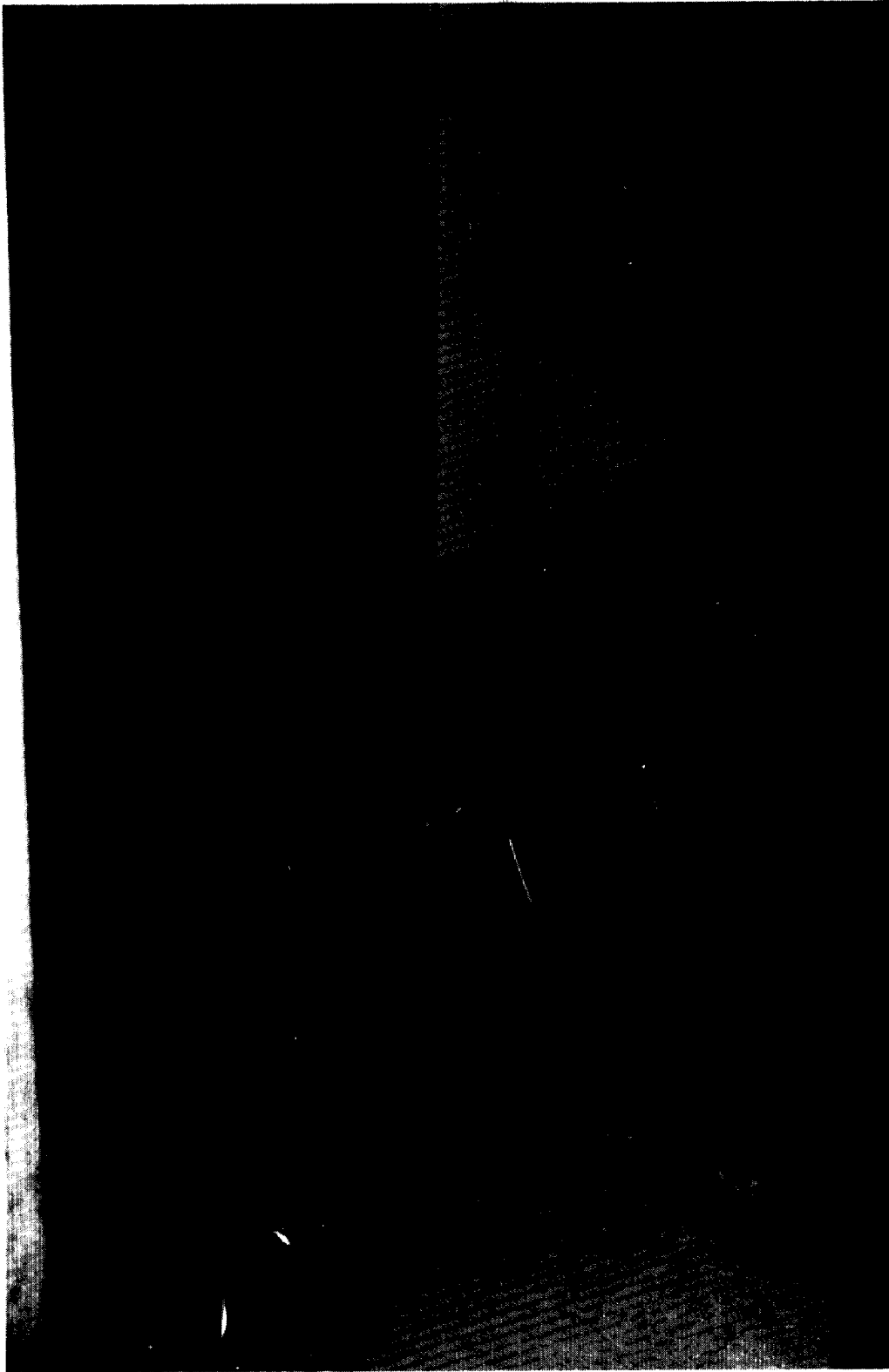
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ONLY A FEW FEET SEPARATE PEOPLE BEING INTERVIEWED AND ACCOMODATIONS FOR PRIVACY ARE LACK ING. THE WAITING AREA IS IN THE BACKGROUND OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH.



**PRIVATE BOOTHS USED FOR INTERVIEWING THE PUBLIC AT A
LOS ANGELES COUNTY WELFARE OFFICE.**



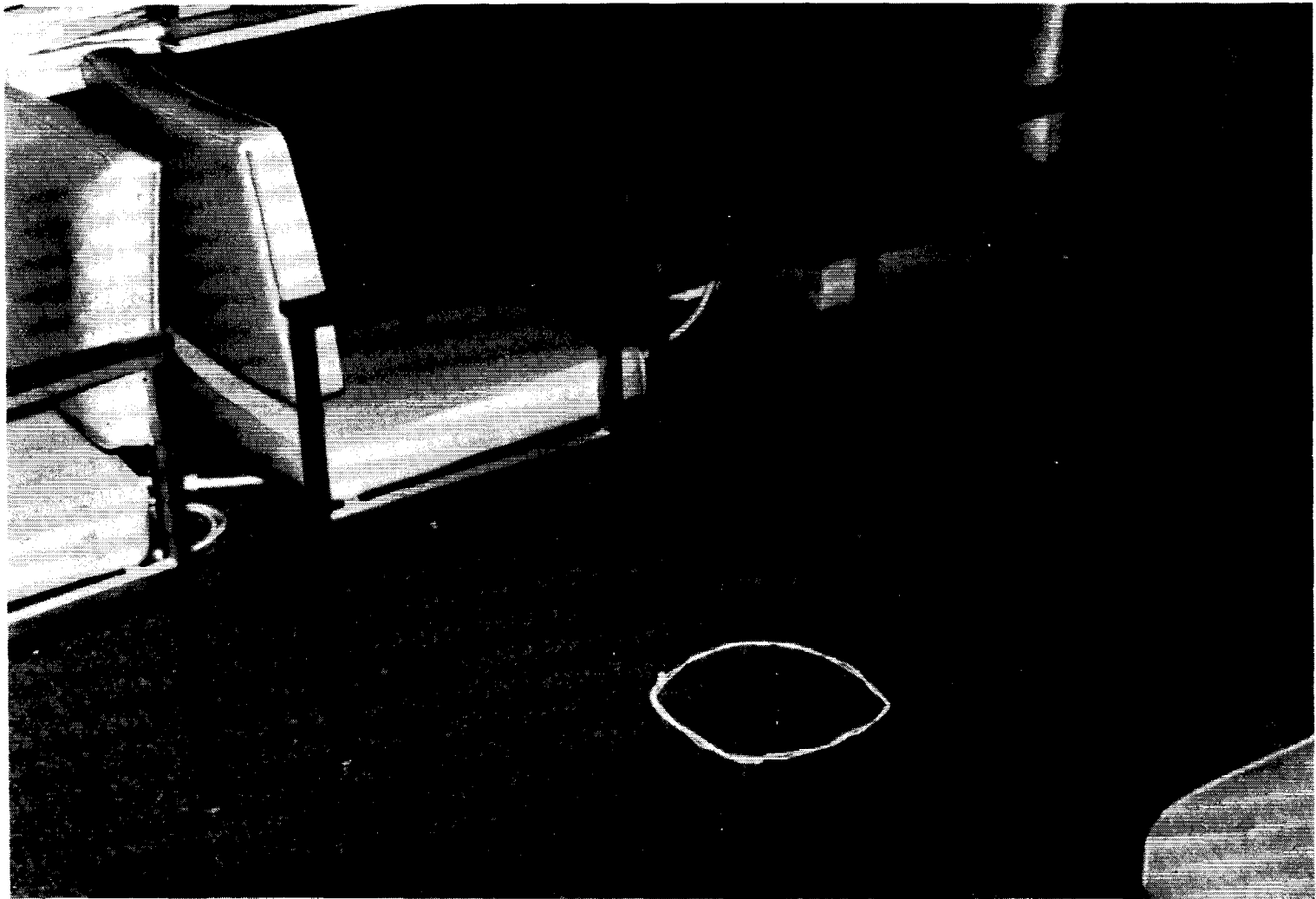
**PRIVATE BOOTH FOR INTERVIEWS PROVIDES A
DIGNIFIED PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT TO
THE PUBLIC.**



5

NORMAL TRAFFIC IN THIS OFFICE USES WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN AISLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH; THE VIEW IS TO THE FRONT OF THE OFFICE. THE POLE NEXT TO THE MAN ON THE RIGHT SUPPORTS THE ROOF.

9



THE WHITE CIRCLE IN THE FOREGROUND OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE LOCATION AND SIZE OF A DEPRESSION IN THE FLOOR OF THE OFFICE.



7

TANGLED ELECTRICAL AND TELEPHONE WIRES PRESENT A HAZARD TO SSA EMPLOYEES AND COULD BE SEEN BY THE PUBLIC.



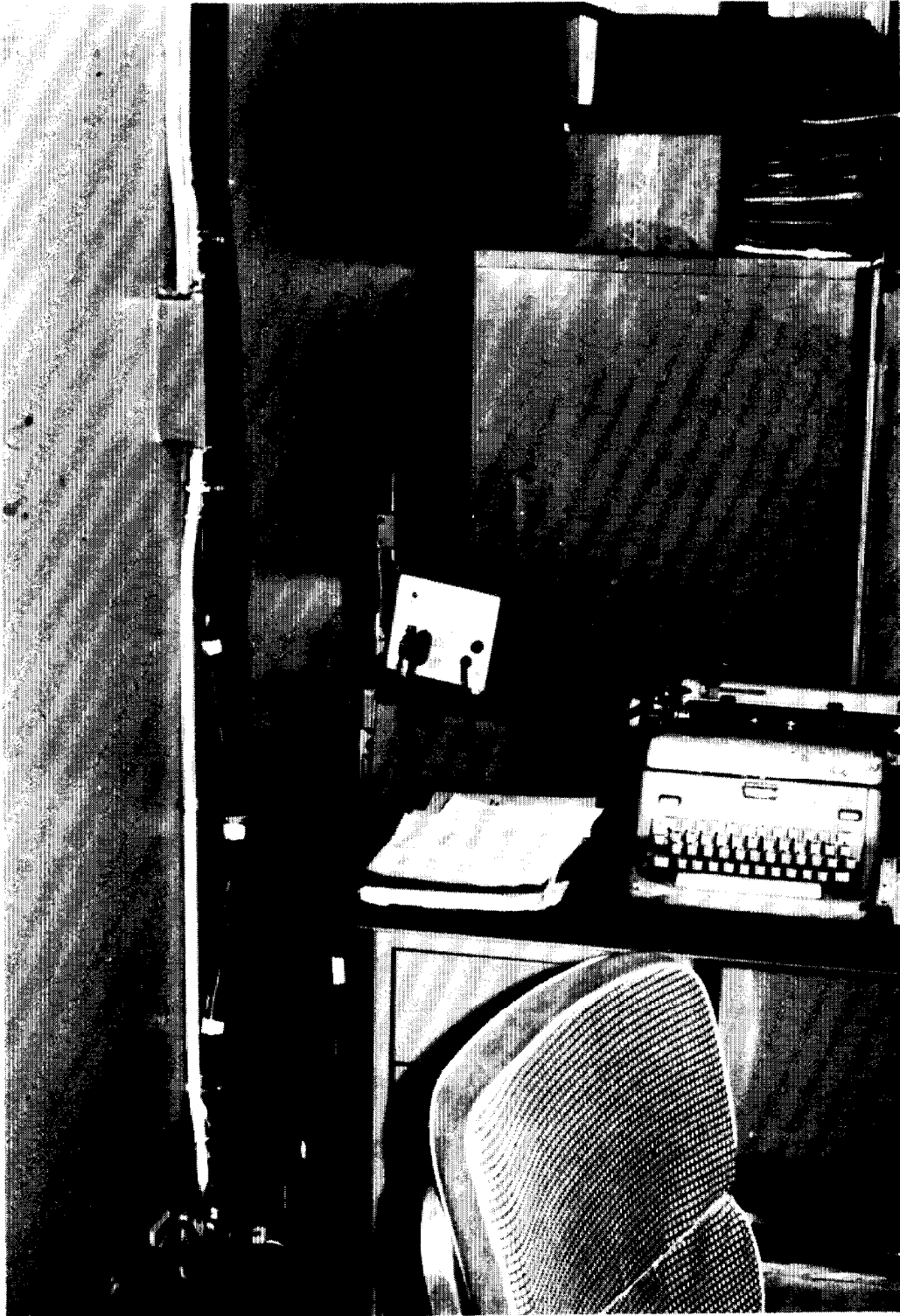
THE ARROW POINTS TO A HOLE IN THE FLOOR FROM WHICH WIRES EMERGE. ACCORDING TO SSA THE CASTOR ON THE EMPLOYEES CHAIR FREQUENTLY DROPS INTO THE HOLE.



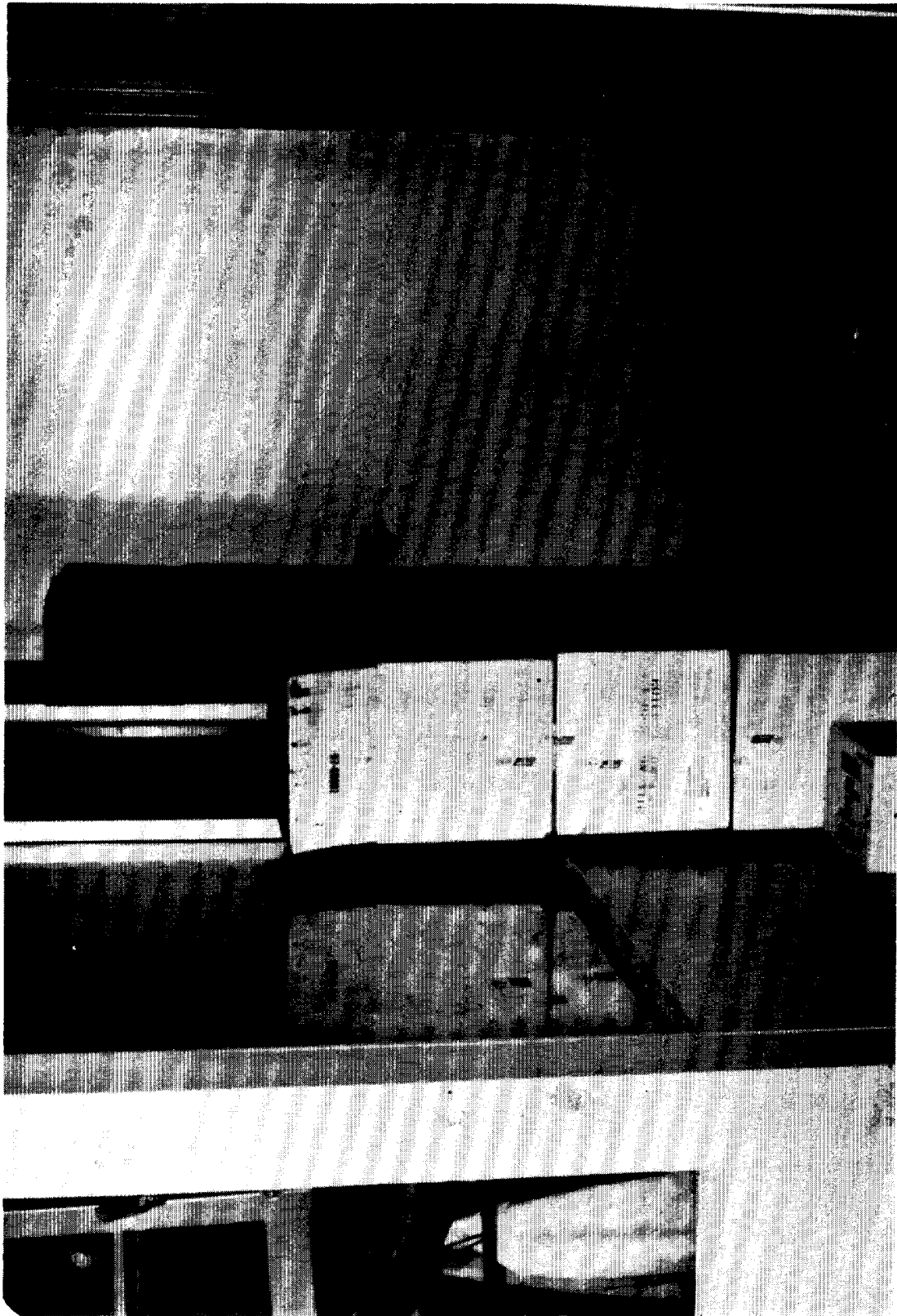
HAZARDOUS OUTLETS AND TELEPHONE CORD.



OUTLET AND WIRING IN THE AISLEWAY PRESENTS A HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC AND EMPLOYEES.



UNSIGHTLY WIRING NEXT TO AN EMPLOYEES WORK STATION.



BOXES OF OFFICE SUPPLIES STACKED IN THE HALLWAY.



BOXES OF OFFICE SUPPLIES STACKED IN THE AISLE.



EMPLOYEES ARE CROWDED TOGETHER AND LACK ADEQUATE WORKSPACE.



**SSA MANUALS ARE STORED UNDER THE DESK IN
SPACE INTENDED FOR THE EMPLOYEE'S FEET.**

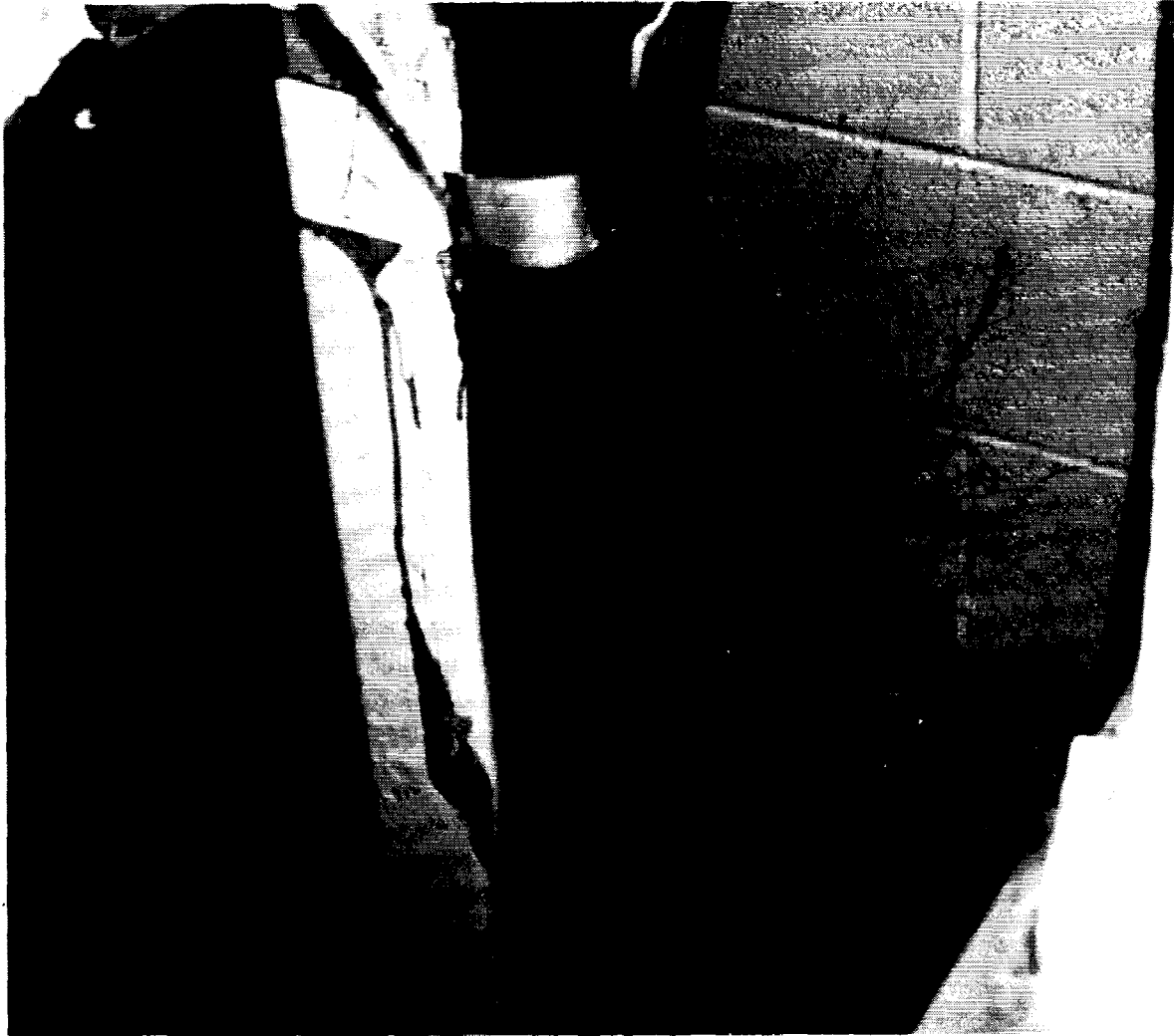


EMPLOYEES ARE CROWDED TOGETHER AND DISTURB ONE ANOTHER WHEN THEY MOVE, TALK ON THE PHONE , USE THE TYPEWRITER, ETC.

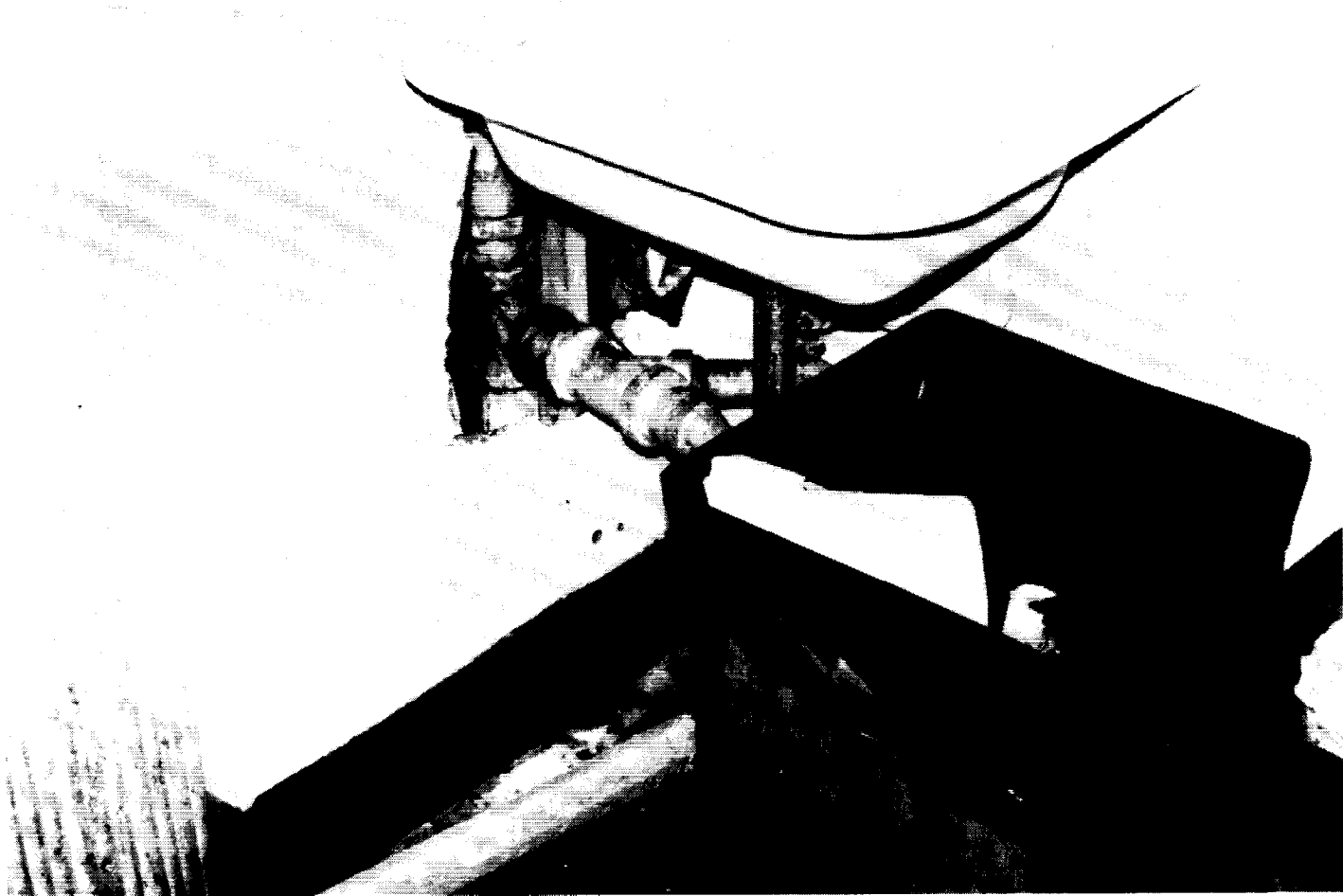


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HOLE IN THE FLOOR USED FOR ACCESS TO WIRING. ACCORDING TO THE OFFICE MANAGER INSECTS ENTER THE OFFICE THROUGH SUCH OPENINGS.



**HOLE IN THE WALL FOR WIRING. ACCORDING THE TO THE OFFICE
MANAGER INSECTS ENTER THE OFFICE THROUGH SUCH OPENINGS.**



**HOLE IN THE WALL FOR PLUMBING. ACCORDING TO THE OFFICE
MANAGER INSECTS AND RODENTS ENTER THE OFFICE THROUGH THE
HOLE. THE LANDLORD FAILED TO CLOSE THE OPENING AFTER
INSTALLING THE SINK.**