



media alert

Colorado Judicial Branch
Michael L. Bender, Chief Justice
Gerald Marroney, State Court Administrator

March 29, 2011

TO: Media covering the 3rd Judicial District (Huerfano and Las Animas counties)
FROM: Jon Sarche, Public Information Coordinator
RE: Court and probation operations to resume in Huerfano County Courthouse

Court and probation operations return to Huerfano County Courthouse
*Report concludes building is structurally sound and recommends
further safety measures to protect public and staff*

WALSENBURG, Colo. – Following receipt of a report concluding the Huerfano County Courthouse is structurally sound, court and probation staff began returning to the courthouse Tuesday, March 29, 2011, and on Wednesday, March 30, 2011, all court proceedings and probation services will operate from the courthouse.

Court and probation operations were suspended at the courthouse on Monday, March 7, out of concern for public and court staff safety while entering or exiting the building. Large sections of rock have broken loose and fallen from the courthouse.

In a report commissioned by the Colorado Judicial Department and Colorado Department of Personnel and Administration, A.G. Wassenaar Inc. and J.R. Harris and Company concluded the falling rock came from a concrete/cement-based coating which had been added to the exterior surface of the building in 2004. Huerfano County workers removed loose stone and surface coating from the building on March 11, 2011. That “scaling” work has addressed the immediate hazard from falling materials, and the report recommended reassessment and scaling as necessary every six months.

The report also recommended other actions including reinforcement of the basement support structure of a chimney, and construction of covered walkways to protect people entering and exiting the building from the south and west entrances.

“We are pleased to be able to return to the county courthouse, and satisfied with the conclusions of the report and we appreciate the county’s cooperation,” said Chief Judge Claude Appel. “We will continue to work with Huerfano County officials to explore options for permanent solutions. We also are grateful to the city of Walsenburg – its mayor, city

administrator, assistant administrator and staff – for letting the courts use the city’s facilities during this transition.”

In a letter to Huerfano County Administrator John Galusha, State Court Administrator Gerald A. Marroney said several interim solutions are necessary for the safety of court staff and the public. Besides reinforcing the chimney and building covered porticos, the letter requested regular inspection and removal of loose material from the building’s walls, work to cover exposed electrical boxes in the attic and a way to reroute pedestrian traffic away from the building perimeter.

Editors note: Copies of the letter and report are available upon request.