

**LVI Services' Responses for PBS "NOW"  
November 17, 2005**

Q1. We've spoken with some LVI employees in the New Orleans area who told us they were undocumented immigrants, meaning they are not legally allowed to be working in the U.S. We heard other reports that a significant percentage of LVI employees in the area are also undocumented. Has LVI heard similar reports? Does LVI believe that all its employees are legally qualified to work in the US? What is LVI's policy with regards to checking the immigration and legal status of its workers?

**A1. LVI Services complies with all state and federal requirements applicable to employee hiring. Federal law requires that LVI obtain an I-9 form within three days of employment. All documentation required from applicants to complete an I-9 form is checked by the initial hiring LVI employee and double-checked by a corporate LVI representative. If the documents are not provided, the applicant is not offered employment with LVI.**

**LVI has been in business for more than 19 years and has never been cited for failure to follow federal regulations associated with proper employee hiring procedures.**

2. We've heard several reports of employees being promised certain wages and overtime-pay prior to beginning work for LVI, but then after working for the company, they discovered their paychecks reflected a lesser pay scale. For example, we spoke with one employee who says he was promised \$12/hr for his work, but only received \$10/hr on his paycheck. He told us he was promised overtime pay, but despite working several overtime shifts, says he's received straight time and no pay at overtime rates. Can you explain why there might be discrepancies between what people are told they will receive, and what actually ends up in their paychecks?

**A2. We are not aware of any discrepancies between promised and actual wages paid to our employees. LVI Services provides compensation to employees based upon the duties performed. Workers performing skilled labor (mold abatement work, for example) receive somewhat higher compensation than workers performing unskilled labor (sweeping sidewalks, picking up debris, etc.). LVI pays overtime to all employees who work more than 40 hours in a given work week.**

3. We were told of several troubling instances that occurred recently at the Shoney's Inn, a local hotel facility we understand LVI is using to house workers. We were told that some workers were physically assaulted by security guards. We were told that LVI employees would routinely enter workers' rooms in the middle of the night to conduct searches. We were told that fifty or so workers who complained about being relocated to another facility were fired. Has LVI become aware of any such incidents at this facility? If so, has any action been taken to remedy this situation?

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**A3. LVI Services provides our employees a safe, clean place to relax after a day's work. This is a responsibility LVI takes very seriously. LVI has gone to considerable effort and expense to ensure that this responsibility is met. We are not aware of workers being assaulted by security guards. Our security guards are off-duty police officers who are retained to keep our employees safe. If a situation were to develop that threatens LVI employees, security would rightly intervene to protect those workers. If an LVI employee is deemed a threat to others, his or her employment is immediately terminated, and that person must vacate the premises. For the safety of our workers and to comply with the hotel fire code, we conduct routine inspections in the mid- to late-evening to ensure that there are no more than four workers housed in each room.**

**In order to provide enhanced security and accommodations for our employees, including housekeeping services, three catered meals a day, washers and dryers, recreational equipment and more, LVI consolidated and upgraded its living facilities. As part of that consolidation, we relocated workers from one facility to another, and those who chose not to move to the newer facilities left our employ.**

4. We've heard several complaints about the housing and living conditions at the two LVI facilities on Highway 61 near St. Rose, LA. Complaints concerned crowded sleeping conditions, inadequate and unsanitary toilet facilities, and the poor quality of food provided. Has LVI heard any similar complaints about these facilities? If so, what actions were taken? Is LVI satisfied with the conditions in these facilities?

**A4. LVI Services has a responsibility to provide our employees a safe, clean place to relax after a day's work. This is a responsibility LVI takes very seriously. Most workers are extremely appreciative of the effort LVI has extended to provide a safe, comfortable place for workers to eat, sleep and relax.**

**As with any service set up to respond to a natural disaster, the LVI village is in a state of continuous improvement. As individuals bring concerns to our attention, we continue to modify the village.**

**Current services at the village include clean, air-conditioned sleeping units, adequate and sanitary toilet facilities, housekeeping services, three square meals per day, washers and dryers, five big screen TVs, pool tables, basketball hoops, and drivers to take employees to the mall, the bank, etc. The most recent request is for LVI to provide church services on site, which LVI is currently working on.**

**In addition to the three square meals per day, LVI holds a Texas-style barbecue every Saturday evening, and a soul food night every Monday, at the request of our employees. LVI continues to invest a lot of time and money to keep our employees safe and adequately cared for despite difficult conditions.**

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5. We have heard reports that some workers who were working in potentially hazardous conditions (exposure to mold, asbestos, etc.) were not given adequate protective equipment (things like proper respirators or protective suits). Why would such workers be missing this equipment? What steps does LVI take to make sure that its employees are working under safe conditions? Does LVI provide every employee who enters a hazardous area the appropriate protection? Does LVI train its workers on how to handle hazardous materials?

**A5. We are not aware of any such reports. Safety is of utmost importance to LVI and its work force. LVI has sufficient stock of necessary personal protective equipment at all project locations. We provide this safety equipment to our employees and work diligently to ensure that all health and safety regulations and company policies are met or exceeded. LVI's Director of Health and Safety and numerous other LVI safety professionals have personally spent considerable time in the Gulf Coast region. LVI currently has four safety professionals in the New Orleans area alone; they move from job site to job site conducting safety meetings, safety audits and providing direction on personal protective equipment to be used by the work force.**

**In addition, LVI has brought physicians down to the Gulf Coast area to provide physicals, pulmonary function testing, and inoculations for our work force.**

**The use of personal protective equipment is a condition of employment. LVI will reprimand or terminate any employee that does not comply with this directive.**

6. We've read statements by LVI officials that indicated the company wanted to hire local workers in the New Orleans area. Is this the company's policy? If so, what steps has the company taken to insure that local workers are a part of its workforce?

**A6. LVI is one of the few firms large enough to provide the manpower, knowledge and equipment necessary to perform these large, complex environmental cleanup and demolition projects. LVI's initial, timely response to the Gulf Coast region was made possible through having access to our 27 offices across the United States, and the resources therein.**

**As a policy, LVI prefers to hire local workers as much as possible. It is more cost effective to LVI and its clients if we can hire local individuals who have a local place to stay, and their own transportation and food. However, local workers are usually unavailable after a hurricane, due to family responsibilities and the disruption in their lives. *The New York Times* reported Thursday in a front-page article that 80 percent of the New Orleans population is still out of town. We've found that the departure of the population has made the task of hiring local workers difficult.**

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**Generally, the percentage of local workers increases with time. In the New Orleans area, it may take longer than usual due to the physical displacement of the general population. By participating in job fairs and other local outreach, LVI continues to reach out to Gulf Coast residents as they continue to trickle back to their devastated neighborhoods.**

7. Several officials with the Laborers Union told us that LVI President Burton Fried was offered over 2,000 local workers to go to work for LVI. Fried supposedly told the union he was interested and that the workers' wages were reasonable. But then later, LVI's chief operating officer John Leonard said that those workers' wages were too expensive. Leonard apparently said the union laborers would have to cut their wages back by one third if they wanted to work for LVI. Is this true? Does LVI think that the wages earned by union laborers (around \$14/hr) are in fact too expensive? What does LVI pay its existing workers who perform this work?

**A7. LVI consistently seeks out the best, most qualified individuals to add to our highly motivated work force. In many cases, we work with unions to assist us in this effort. In fact, LVI has long been the largest employer of unionized asbestos abatement workers in the United States. In the Gulf Coast region, the majority of our drivers for transporting workers to and from the job site are union members. However, the total compensation package that the Union required was higher than what was being paid to workers performing similar tasks in New Orleans, and we could not agree to it.**

8. We have heard that LVI is a subcontractor to the Army Corps of Engineers. Is LVI working under any additional government contracts in the Gulf Coast area doing hurricane-related work? Do any of the workers who are living at the above locations work on those contracts? If LVI is not a direct contractor with the Federal Government, who is it contracting with?

**A8. We are focused on large-scale hurricane cleanup and restoration projects for hospitals, hotels, resorts, retail outlets, municipal buildings and businesses – helping to restore people's livelihoods and essential services. LVI has not provided hurricane-related assistance for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers in the New Orleans area.**

9. For the work LVI is contracted to do in the Gulf Coast area, can you give us a dollar amount of the contracts? What does the company charge per man hour of labor for general cleanup? What does the company charge per man hour for asbestos or mold remediation?

**A9. As a private company, we do not disclose such information. It is proprietary and any such information would give our competitors an unfair advantage. What we can say is that each contract and client engagement are unique, depending on the nature of the work and our level of involvement.**