1 NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH 2 REVIEW BOARD 3 CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER Docket No. RNO 10-1384 OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND 4 HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, DIVISION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OF THE 5 DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY, 6 Complainant, 7 vs. JAN -6 2010 8 KODIAK ROOFING AND WATERPROOFING CO., 9 **OSH REVIEW BOARD** Respondent. 10 BY. 11 12 DECISION This matter having come before the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND 13 HEALTH REVIEW BOARD at a hearing commenced on the 9th day of December, 14 15 2009, in furtherance of notice duly provided according to law, MR. ROB 16 KIRKMAN, ESQ., appearing on behalf of the Complainant, Chief 17 Administrative Officer of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Division of Industrial Relations (OSHA); and MR. DAVID 18 FORD, Vice President of Operations on behalf of Respondent, Kodiak 19 Roofing and Waterproofing Co.; the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH 20 **REVIEW BOARD** finds as follows: 21 Jurisdiction in this matter has been conferred in accordance with 22 23 Nevada Revised Statute 618.315. The complaint filed by the OSHA sets forth allegations of 24 violations of Nevada Revised Statutes as referenced in Exhibit "A", 25 26 attached thereto.

photographs which were identified as Complainant's Exhibit 1 and 2.

Prior to commencement of the hearing, counsel

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stipulated to the admission of documents and evidence, including

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DIR LEGAL CARSON CITY OFFICE Respondent counsel reserved the right to object to any particular exhibits during the course of the hearing.

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3 In Citation 1, Item 1a, referencing 29 CFR 1926.502(d)(8) the employer was charged with failure to ensure a horizontal lifeline was 4 designed, installed and utilized under the supervision of a qualified 5 person as part of the complete personal fall arrest system. The alleged 6 violation was classified as "Serious" and a penalty proposed in the 7 amount of Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000.00).

In Citation 1, Item 1b, referencing 29 CFR 1926.503(a)(1) the 9 employer was charged with failing to ensure that a training program was 10 provided to each employee who may be exposed to fall hazards. 11 The alleged violation was classified as "Serious." The penalty was grouped 12 13 with Citation 1, Item 1a.

14 Counsel for complainant, the through Safety and Health Representative (SHR) Alberto Garcia presented evidence and testimony as 15 16 to the violations and penalties.

17 Mr. Garcia testified that on or about May 14, 2009 he conducted a programmed/planned inspection of the Legends construction site located 18 in Sparks, Nevada. He was accompanied during the inspection by Safety 19 and Health Representative (SHR) Jeff Morrow. Mr. Garcia initially 20 observed employees whom he later identified as those of respondent, 21 working from roofing canopies near a roof structure at approximately 13 22 feet from the ground to the edge of the working surface. 23 The SHR testified he used a tape to measure the distance above the ground and 24 also compared same to a nearby ladder with known measurements. 25 He testified that Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) adopted the Code of Federal 26 Regulations (CFR) at 1926.502(d)(8) which require specified fall 27 protection systems for employees working over six feet in height from 28

the ground level while tied off to a horizontal safety line. 1 He concluded the safety line system did not meet the criteria contained in 2 3 the standard. Mr. Garcia testified as to photographic evidence contained at Exhibit 2, which depicted the horizontal line safety 4 5 He identified specific safety deficiencies from the photos system. which included the saddle portion securing the safety line to the 6 horizontal line as being installed backwards which could result in a 7 failure. He further identified through the photographs a lack of any 8 protecting sleeve and non-existence of rope thimbles. 9 In noting the deficiencies the SHR requested information from respondent's employee 10 Mr. Hunter who identified himself as the "qualified person" under whose supervision the horizontal safety line had been installed and utilized. Mr. Garcia referenced the provisions of 29 CFR 1926.502(d)(8) which provides:

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"Horizontal lifelines shall be designated. installed, and used, under the supervision of a qualified person, as part of a complete personal fall arrest system, which maintains a safety factor of at least two." (Emphasis added)

SHR Garcia requested Mr. Hunter to provide any data at the site which 18 could confirm the established capacity of the line to identify the 19 maximum weights which could be withstood. 20 Mr. Hunter was unable to furnish any information in that regard. He then asked Mr. Hunter to 21 inspect the line himself and determine if any deficiencies exist. After 22 so doing Mr. Hunter informed SHR Garcia that he found the line to be 23 properly installed, notwithstanding the photographic evidence previous 24 subject of testimony by Mr. Garcia. Mr. Garcia explained to Mr. Hunter 25 the definition of qualified person under the standard and asked if he 26 (Hunter) was so qualified. Mr. Garcia testified that Mr. Hunter told 27 him he did not believe he was a qualified person within the referenced 28

definition. Mr. Garcia then inquired as to whether a general contractor or any other person at the site or any documentation could be produced to establish that anyone was satisfying the "qualified person" criteria involved in the lifeline design or erection. Mr. Hunter testified there were none.

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6 On further inquiry of Mr. Hunter, SHR Garcia testified that Mr. 7 Hunter could not verbalize or produce information or documents to 8 demonstrate sufficient training to be a qualified person but said that 9 he could go to his archives and provide some information; however no 10 information was forthcoming.

A "qualified person" is defined in 29 CFR 1926.32(m) as:

". . . one who, by possession of a recognized degree, certificate, or professional standing, or who by extensive knowledge, training, and experience, has successfully demonstrated his ability to solve or resolve problems relating to the subject matter, the work or the project."

SHR Garcia continued his investigation and spoke to other employees of respondent with regard to the system. He inquired as to whether any of them had "qualified person" status and testified all responded in the negative. He further testified that the employees interviewed informed him they had not used a torque wrench to adjust the line, did not know the capacity of the line, and could not explain the importance of torque. He further inquired of them regarding the turnbuckle and the u-bolts to secure the line. Again the employees demonstrated a lack of knowledge or understanding of the safety systems.

During continued investigation by SHR Garcia, the three respondent employees who were observed performing roofing operations from two adjacent canopies stated they had received training on Section 1730 of subchapter 4 of the CAL OSHA regulations. However the employees

demonstrated no training knowledge as to hazard safety line installation 1 or use; nor was there any evidence they had received fall hazard 2 training under the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as adopted by the 3 State of Nevada. He testified that CAL OSHA permits employees to work 4 up to twenty (20) feet above ground without protection. However Nevada, 5 having adopted the Federal system under the Code of Federal Regulations, 6 requires employee protection for any work over six (6) feet from ground 7 8 Neither Mr. Hunter nor any other representative of respondent level. could provide evidence of full hazard training as required under Nevada 9 10 regulations. SHR Garcia determined there to be a violation of 29 CFR 1926.503(a)(1) which requires the employer to ensure a training program 11 is provided to each employee who might be exposed to fall hazards. 12

SHR Garcia testified as the serious nature of the violation cited at item 1b due to the potential for serious injury or death from a fall of approximately 13 feet above ground. He further testified that he reviewed his operations manual and assessed a penalty after giving due consideration to the criteria which resulted in a proposed penalty for item 1b grouped with Item 1a in the sum of \$2,000.00.

On cross-examination, SHR Garcia answered questions regarding the 19 typical hazards which could result from an improper horizontal safety 20 line installation. 21 Mr. Ford referenced Subpart M under the fall protection standards and the requirements that lifelines be protected 22 against being cut or abraded. 23 He inquired of Mr. Garcia of the 24 potential for same. Mr. Garcia answered that in his opinion the turnbuckle edge could cut or abrade the line. He testified he observed 25 sharp edges on the turnbuckles from his ladder through the camera 26 utilized in obtaining photographic evidence. 27 On further crossexamination as to alternate methods of protection, Mr. Garcia responded 28

that a "safety monitoring system" could be utilized in place of a lifeline system if so elected by a respondent employer. Mr. Garcia further responded however that he was neither informed nor did he observe the existence of any safety monitoring system as an alternate means of compliance.

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On continued direct examination, SHR Garcia testified Mr. Hunter 6 could not demonstrate knowledge of turnbuckles, torque, or weight 7 capacity levels and that, together with the photos of the installed 8 lifeline, confirmed that Mr. Hunter was not in fact a qualified person under the OSHA definition.

On re-direct examination, Mr. Garcia testified that Mr. Hunter 11 admitted he was not a qualified person for lifeline installation. 12 He further testified that from the responses of Mr. Hunter and the 13 interviewed employees he observed and photographed exposed to the 14 potential hazard, it was clear there was no design, 15 installation, or supervision of the system by any qualified person as required by the 16 standard. Mr. Garcia testified he elected not to cite for the lifeline 17 defects but rather the deficient installation without a qualified person 18 19 and lack of training.

Complainant witness SHR Jeff Morrow, confirmed the testimony of Mr. 20 Garcia on lack of employee training knowledge and also testified that 21 the three employees of respondent advised him (Morrow) that they were 22 not sure on the required method for u-bolt installation on the safety 23 24 line.

Complainant witness Mr. Jess Langford identified himself as an 25 employee of the safety consultation section (SCATS) of the Department 26 27 of Industrial Relations. He testified he is a trainer in the safety section which is completely separate from the enforcement arm of DIR. 28

He testified that although he is a trainer and holds what is known as 1 an "OSHA 500" certificate, he does not consider himself a "qualified 2 person" as defined under occupational safety and health law. 3 He testified the definition of a qualified person means certification, 4 extensive knowledge, degrees or experience in the field to be qualified 5 under certain construction applications. 6 He testified that as an instructor of safety courses, and a holder of an OSHA 500 certificate, 7 he does not consider himself "qualified" under the OSHA definition for 8 9 specific construction related certain applications. direct On examination, Mr. Langford responded that being a holder of an OSHA 500 certificate only reflects that a person is a qualified trainer, but not that he is a "qualified person" under the OSHA standard definition for any particular construction application.

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At the conclusion of complainant's case, respondent representative 14 Ford presented evidence and testimony. Witness David Nash testified as 15 the safety director of respondent. He identified Exhibit A, an OSHA 500 16 certificate, which had been issued to Mr. Hunter. Mr. Nash testified 17 that he recently accepted the safety director position with respondent 18 in place of Mr. Hunter, who is no longer employed by the company. 19 He testified that he is a California safety representative but has now 20 assumed the Nevada position. 21

On cross-examination of respondent witness Nash, he admitted that the safety documents provided to complainant demonstrated only that employees were trained under CAL OSHA but not the Federal/Nevada system. He admitted there are differences under California and Nevada OSHA requirements, although not certain of the extent of same. He testified that he has no evidence to offer to support or confirm respondent employee training under Nevada law.

On closing argument counsel for the complainant argued that at 1 Citation 1, Item 1a, there was no evidence or testimony that a 2 "qualified" person, as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations, 3 designed, installed or supervised the use of the horizontal safety line 4 5 subject of the violation. He argued that SHR Garcia's unrefuted testimony established the facts of violation and noncompliance with the 6 standard. He further argued that the photographic evidence depicted the deficiencies in the safety line to corroborate the SHR testimony. Counsel asserted the evidence showed the horizontal line conditions were inconsistent with same having been designed or installed under the supervision of a qualified person. He argued it was unrefuted that Mr. Hunter told SHR Garcia that he was not a qualified person despite his earlier identification of himself as the person so designated.

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Counsel additionally argued that the OSHA 500 certificate alone was 14 not competent evidence to establish "qualified person" status under CFR 15 1926.32(m), as it merely qualifies a holder to teach classes on general 16 construction safety. He noted particularly that Mr. Hunter, in the 17 unrefuted testimony of Mr. Garcia, admitted he had no knowledge of the 18 line weight capacity nor the torque requirement on the turnbuckle. 19 No testimony or evidence was produced to show the horizontal line had been 20 properly installed under the supervision of a qualified person nor was 21 there any documentation to establish weight capacity or torque on the 22 23 turnbuckle. Exposure was established by the SHR testimony and photographs in evidence. The serious classification and the proposed 24 penalty were not subject of any challenge or sworn testimony admitted 25 26 as evidence.

Counsel further argued at Citation 1, Item 1(b) that no documents 27 were produced by respondent to demonstrate training occurred under the 28

Nevada/Federal system, but only that some training had occurred under CAL OSHA. He noted California law is different, less stringent, and permits employees to work without fall arrest safety systems at a height of twenty (20) feet above ground as opposed to the six (6) foot limit under Nevada OSHA. Counsel concluded by arguing that the complainant had fully met its burden of proof and there was no evidence to rebut or refute same.

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Respondent presented closing argument. Mr. Ford represented that 8 he had no evidence to confirm or deny the testimony of SHR Garcia. 9 He argued that Mr. Hunter did hold an OSHA 500 certificate, and asserted 10 he had experience in the field and therefore respondent did satisfy the 11 standard by having a "qualified person" on site. He further argued that 12 13 the employees were trained under Federal OSHA as well as CAL OSHA. Mr. Ford argued that while CFR 1926.501(b)(ii)(10) permits protection 14 through a safety monitor as an **alternate means of compliance**, respondent 15 elected use of a safety line which was correctly installed except for 16 a few small points. Counsel referenced an OSHA administrative decision 17 which affirmed violation of a standard but reduced the classification 18 19 from serious to de minimis because employees were protected 20 sufficiently, although not to the full extent of the standard.

In all proceedings commenced by the filing of a notice of contest, the burden of proof rests with the Administrator. N.A.C. 618.788(1).

All facts forming the basis of a complaint must be proved by a preponderance of the evidence. <u>Armor Elevator Co.</u>, 1 OSHC 1409, 1973-1974 OSHD ¶16,958 (1973).

To prove a violation of a standard, the Secretary must establish (1) the applicability of the standard, (2) the existence of noncomplying conditions, (3) employee exposure or access, and (4) that the employer knew or with the exercise of reasonable diligence could have known of the

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| 1 2 3 4 5 | <u>Lnc</u> CCH <u>Har</u> 168 (No | lative condition ., 79 OSAHRC 16/H OSHD ¶23,400, vey Workover, Ind 7, 1688-90, 1979 . 76-1408, 1979) retary of Labor, 3). | 34, 7 BNA OSHC 1 p.28,373 (No. 7 c., 79 OSAHRC 72 CCH OSHD 23,830 ; American Wre | 233, 1235, 1979 76-1948, 1979); /D5, 7 BNA OSHC , pp. 28,908-10 cking Corp. v. | |
| 6 | A respon | dent may rebut th | ne evidence by s | showing: | |
| 7 | 1. | That the stand situation at is | dard was inapp] ssue; | licable to the | |
| 8 9 10 | 2. | of access to a | ion was in comp a hazard. See, 193, 1975-1976 | Anning-Johnson | |
| 10 | A "serio | us" violation i | s established | in accordance | with NRS |
| 12 | 618.625(2) which provides in pertinent part: | | | | |
| 13 | a serious violation exists in a place of employment if there is a substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from a condition which exists or from one or more practices, means, methods, operations or processes which have been adopted or are in use at that place of employment unless the employer did not and could not, with the exercise of reasonable diligence, know the presence of the violation. (emphasis added) | | | | |
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| 18 | The defense of | employee miscon | duct requires: | | |
| 19 | (1) | The employer muprevent the vio | ust establish w lation | ork rules desig | nated to |
| 20 | (2) | The employer m | ust have adequa | tely communicat | ed these |
| 21 22 | (2) | rules to its em | ployees | | |
| 22 | (3) | The employer ha | | | í |
| 24 | (| The employer have violations have | been discovered | enforced the ru 1. | les when |
| 25 | Evidence that the employer effectively communicated and enforced safety policies to protect against the hazard permits an inference that the employer justifiably relied on its employees to comply with the applicable safety rules and that violations of these safety policies were not forseeable or preventable. <u>Austin Bldg. Co. v. Occupational</u> <u>Safety & Health Review Comm.</u> , 647 F.2d 1063, 1068 | | | | |
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(10th Cir. 1981). 1 2 When an employer proves that it has effectively communicated and enforced its safety policies, 3 serious citations are dismissed. See Secretary of Labor v. Consoldated Edison Co., 13 O.S.H. Cas. (BNA) 2107 (OSHRC Jan. 11, 1989); <u>Secretary of</u> <u>Labor v. General Crane Inc.</u>, 13 O.S.H. Cas. (BNA) 4 1608 (OSHRC Jan. 19, 1988); <u>Secretary of Labor v.</u> <u>Greer Architectural Prods. Inc.</u>, 14 O.S.H. Cas. 5 6 (BNA) 1200 (OSHRC July 3, 1989). 7 The recognized defense of alternate means of compliance, requires 8 a respondent to rebut the evidence and meet its burden of proof. Α 9 cited employer, when found to be in non-compliance with specific 10 standard criteria, can defend by proving it effectuated an "alternate 11 means of compliance." 12 See <u>Altor, Inc., et al.</u>, 2001 OSHD ¶ 32,526, at p. 50,541 involving a serious violation of 29 CFR 13 1926.501(c)(1). The respondent employer in Altor assigned an employee to go down to ground level and 14 monitor the area where overhead concrete form stripping was taking place. The assigned employee was to watch for employees in the area and warn 15 them away from the areas where there was a danger 16 of falling debris. No barricades were erected to prevent employee access to the areas and there was 17 no protection afforded by a canopy as required by In <u>Altor</u>, the use of a monitor to the standard. 18 warn off employees was not found to constitute a sufficient alternate means of compliance to satisfy 19 the requirements of the standard. 20 Here, there was no evidence of any alternate means of compliance in place to support the recognized elements of the affirmative defense. 21 22 The board finds а violation at Citation 1, Item 1(a). 23 Complainant's burden to prove the violation was met by the unrefuted 24 sworn testimony of SHR Garcia, SHR Morrow and the photographic evidence 25 at Exhibit 2. Employees of respondent were observed and photographed working while utilizing "tie-off" to a horizontal lifeline system. 26 The photographs corroborated the testimonial evidence that the lifeline was 27 installed with deficiencies which could result in a failure of the line. 28

The unrebutted testimony of Mr. Garcia was that Mr. Hunter admitted he was not a "qualified person" as defined in the standard. See 29 CFR 1926.32(m).

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Mr. Hunter initially identified himself as the supervisor of 4 respondent responsible for the safety line installation and a qualified 5 person. ". . . (A) supervisor's knowledge of deviations from standards 6 7 . . is properly imputed to the respondent employer. . ." See Division of Occupational Safety and Health vs. Pabco Gypsum, 105 Nev. 371, 775 P.2d 701 (1989). The testimony of SHR Garcia and the photographic evidence, established the applicability of the standard, existence of noncomplying conditions, employee exposure to recognized fall hazards, and employer knowledge (constructive). Employer knowledge, foreseeability, and lack of safety enforcement by supervisory personnel prevents reliance upon the defense of unpreventable employee misconduct to relieve respondent of liability.

The SHR testimonial evidence of the conduct and responses of 16 17 interviewed employees, and the presence of supervisor/representative Hunter, demonstrate a lack of adequately communicated and/or effectively 18 enforced safety rules for fall hazards. The record does not contain 19 competent evidence to excuse the employer from violation after 20 satisfaction of the burden of proof of violation by the complainant and 21 a shift of the burden to respondent to prove the defense of 22 unpreventable employee misconduct or alternate means of compliance. See 23 Jensen Construction Co., 7 OSHC 1477, 1979 OSHD ¶23,664 (1979). Accord, 24 Marson Corp., 10 OHSHC 2128, 1980 OSHC 1045 ¶24,174 (1980). 25

While respondent representative Ford argued in his closing argument 26 that a safety monitoring system was in place, there was no evidence 27 presented or admitted in the record to demonstrate the actual existence 28

of any safety monitoring system and therefore an alternate means of compliance with the cited standard.

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The testimony of respondent witness Nash provided no evidence that 3 employees were trained under Nevada OSHA nor was there any other 4 evidence to establish same. The unrefuted testimony of Mr. Garcia was 5 that the employees exposed and interviewed at the job site demonstrated 6 either no answers to safety line questions or answers inconsistent with 7 their having been trained on installation or use of horizontal safety 8 lines. Mr. Hunter and the interviewed employees' lack of understanding 9 as to weight capacity, torque or u-bolt connections, are evidence of a 10 lack of training. Mr. Hunter did not appear or testify at the hearing. 11 No representative of respondent could testify that Mr. Hunter was a 12 "qualified person" as defined in 29 CFR 1926.32(m). Mr. Hunter admitted 13 to SHR Garcia that he did not believe himself to be a "qualified person" 14 as defined by the standards, although he initially identified himself 15 as such. An OSHA 500 certificate standing alone is not evidence that 16 the holder is a "qualified person" as defined in 29 CFR 1926.32(m). 17

At Citation 1, Item 1a, the board finds a violation of the cited standard. The presence of a supervisory employee imputed knowledge of the employee violative conduct to the employer. See A. J. McNulty & Co., Inc., 4 OSHC 1097, 1975-1976 OSHD ¶ 20,600 (1976); and Division of Occupational Safety and Health vs. Pabco Gypsum, <u>supra</u>.

At Citation 1, Item 1b, the board finds a violation of the cited standard. The evidence and testimony met complainant's burden of proof to establish there was no training of respondent employees as required by Nevada and Federal OSHA. The SHR testimony proved that the conduct of employee Hunter as well as the other employees interviewed who were exposed to the hazard, reflected actions inconsistent with those who had

been trained. There was no evidence or testimony whatsoever as to any alternate means of compliance. There was no evidence or testimony as to employee misconduct of Mr. Hunter or the interviewed employees.

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4 The board concludes there was sufficient proof by a preponderance of evidence to find violations of the cited standards at Citation 1, 5 Item 1a and Citation 1, Item 1b. The defense of unpreventable employee 6 misconduct is not available based upon constructive employer knowledge 7 and foreseeability of the violative conditions. No competent evidence 8 of an alternate means of compliance was offered or admitted in the 9 record. The classification of the violation as Serious was established 10 by the sworn testimony of SHR Garcia and unrebutted by the respondent 11 12 witnesses or evidence. The proposed grouped penalty of \$2,000.00 is The Board confirms classification of the violation as 13 reasonable. Serious and the proposed penalty of \$2,000.00. 14

The board further concludes there was sufficient proof by a preponderance of evidence to find a violation of the cited standard at Citation 1, Item 1b. The facts, testimony and evidence were unrebutted and established a lack of training under applicable Nevada and Federal law as required by the standard. The classification of Serious and the penalty grouped with Citation 1, Item 1a are confirmed.

Based upon the above and foregoing, it is the decision of the 21 NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD that violations of 22 Nevada Revised Statute did occur 23 as to Citation 1, Item 1a, 1926.502(d)(8) and Citation 1, Item 1b, 29 CFR 1926.503(a)(1). 24 The classifications of the violations as "Serious" and the proposed grouped 25 penalty in the amount of Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000.00) are approved. 26

The Board directs counsel for the complainant to submit proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law to the **NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL**

SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD and serve copies on opposing counsel within twenty (20) days from date of decision. After five (5) days time for filing any objection, the final Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law shall be submitted to the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD by prevailing counsel. Service of the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law signed by the Chairman of the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD shall constitute the Final Order of the BOARD.

DATED: This 6th day of January, 2010.

NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD

By /s/ TIM JONES, Chairman