

Opening of New Dorms Tied to Rat Problem in Meade Heights

By Matthew McKeown
Capital Times Editor

A high ranking Penn State official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told *The Capital Times* last week that the construction of the new student housing behind the Olmsted Building is a direct result of a rat problem in Meade Heights.

The source confirmed that large rats, some as big as cats or raccoons, have been infesting some of the residences in Meade Heights and, despite everyone's best efforts, the problem is only getting worse.

"It's bad enough that they built the residential buildings on a toxic waste site," the source said. "But with the rat situation, we knew we had to relocate those students out of Meade Heights as soon as possible."

The source said he was pressured by higher-ups in University Park to keep the rodent infestation quiet to not alarm parents or alumni.

"I just couldn't keep such a horrible thing hidden any longer," said the source.

"Too many lives are potentially in danger. What if one of those cat-sized rats bites a student? Do you know what the liability would be for this school?"

The rats have been a problem in Meade Heights for years but only recently did the situation become a health hazard.

That's when health inspectors, making their usual summer visit to the campus, began finding large rodent droppings inside many of the residences.

Furthermore, health inspectors found several dead rats in an empty residence. They filed a codes violation report which was given to Housing and Food Services, the source said.

"They did get exterminators right away but the guy [one of the exterminators] saw one of the bigger rats and left," claims the source. "After that, Housing just let the problem go."

Residents have complained of seeing stray cats and raccoons rummaging in garbage cans but little was done about the complaints.

"Housing personnel and even the campus police knew that cats and coons weren't making the mess, it was the rats. And fearing getting bitten, they ignored the complaints," said the source.

Communications student Bryan Kapschull acknowledged

that there is a bad rat epidemic at Meade Heights.

"I hate walking from my car into my place," Kapschull said. "I never know what the hell is going to be scurrying along the driveway," Kapschull continued.

The anonymous source also

emphasized that the low number of students who actually utilize Meade Heights is not a coincidence.

"Each year students tell each other the problems that Meade Heights has," said the source. "It's fairly common knowledge

to the residents that the rat problem will remain until they complete the construction of the new dorms."

Construction for the new housing is set to begin soon. The source said students can expect the dorm's opening to be in the

fall of 2001. Until then, students will have to be extra careful walking around Meade Heights and especially inside their residences.

"You just don't know what's waiting for you over there," said the source.

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