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County halts building on VA campus in West L.A.

By Martha Groves
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The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works plans to issue a stop-work order today to Fox Entertainment Group after it graded a site on the federally owned West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs campus without permission.

Community watchdogs late last week were startled to see construction activity at a site just west of the 405 Freeway and north of Wilshire Boulevard. It is near an oil well on the VA property.

They alerted local and federal elected officials, who learned from the VA that Fox planned to build a storage facility known as a "Butler building."

John Kelly, deputy director of the county's public works department, said an inspector would inform the construction supervisor that "they're working without the necessary approvals and permits."

The VA campus is federally owned and surrounded by the city of Los Angeles.

In matters of private development, however, the property is considered to be part of unincorporated Los Angeles County. A private entity such as Fox would therefore be required to seek county approval for construction.

County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said the Fox project was emblematic of an "ad hoc" approach to development on the VA property that is intended to maximize revenue. "This has been done very secretly," he said. "You wake up one day and see a big tractor grading a pad near an oil well."

Calls to the VA were not returned.

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