

Construction legal disputes set to increase

James Boley , August 4th, 2009

A lawyer from full service international firm Fulbright & Jaworski has warned that the current economic climate is increasing the number of legal disputes raised within the construction industry.

Fulbright partner Jonathan Sutcliffe, who specialises in international arbitration and dispute resolution, said the firm was already seeing an increase in disputes and that this was likely to continue for the duration of the slowdown.

"We have started to see an increase in disputes, not limited to arbitration," said Sutcliffe. "We expect there to be more as the recession continues to take hold."

Sutcliffe is transferring from Fulbright's Dubai office at the end of August, having supported the firm's work in the region from London for much of the past year. The move is one of three by the firm, aimed at boosting its international dispute resolution capabilities in the region.

"We were planning the move anyway, even before the crisis, so this move is not prompted by that," said Sutcliffe. "We felt that we should have an international arbitration expert on the ground in Dubai to serve our clients' needs there."

Sutcliffe said that the economic situation meant that cases brought forward would be financially very critical ones. "There's perhaps not the big feature of disputes that people usually anticipate in a crisis because lots of corporates are concerned about cost, so they're only bringing claims that they really need to," he said.

"Having a strong team of experienced disputes and arbitration lawyers in the region is key as the economic landscape shifts, prompting new disputes," said Fulbright executive committee chair Steven B. Pfeiffer.

