



## OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL *City of Chicago*

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Dear Commissioner Choucair:

The purpose of this letter is to commend your office for ending an inefficient and wasteful practice revealed by an IGO investigation and to identify another potentially inefficient practice that merits your attention as an area for possible cost savings.

The Inspector General's Office recently concluded an investigation which found that for roughly two years, five mailroom employees of the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) were swiping in on timekeeping machines at remote locations, picking up City vehicles, and driving to CDPH headquarters at 333 South State Street.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the day, the employees would leave CDPH headquarters early in order to drive back to the remote locations, swipe out, and go home. On these daily trips to and from 333 South State Street, with only rare exceptions, the employees did not perform work related to their City of Chicago employment.

When asked why the CDPH vehicles were parked overnight at remote locations, a mailroom employee stated that a previous leadership team had decided to disperse the vehicles in preparation for a possible bioterrorism event, although the vehicles were not stocked to respond to such an event. The current supervisor and previous supervisor of the mailroom employees said that while the practice predated their arrivals at CDPH, they could not operationally justify parking these vehicles overnight at remote locations and paying employees to drive them to and from the headquarters location each day.

The IGO conservatively estimates that the commute to and from remote locations took an average of 30 minutes per day for each employee, resulting in unnecessary vehicle wear, fuel costs, and approximately \$50,000 of lost employee productivity over two years.<sup>2</sup>

Following discussions with our investigators, CDPH discontinued this practice and the mailroom vehicles are now centralized at a parking lot near CDPH's headquarters at 333 South State Street. I commend you and your staff for recognizing the inefficiency of this practice and acting to end it.

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<sup>1</sup> IGO case # 11-0087. The IGO did not find evidence of wrongdoing by the mailroom employees, who were following the direction of their past supervisors.

<sup>2</sup> Three of the employees worked 40 hours per week and the other two employees worked 35 hours per week. Thus, the combined normal work week for the five employees was 190 hours, or 38 hours per day. The estimated time lost to this unnecessary driving was 2.5 hours per day for the group, or 6.6% of the work day. The current salaries of the five employees plus an additional assumed fringe benefit value of 35% equals \$430,000, of which 6.6% is \$28,380. This is conservatively rounded down to \$25,000 in lost productivity per year assuming that the employees earned up to 3.25% less in compensation during part of the time that this practice was in place.

I also want to call to your attention a related practice and recommend that you examine whether it may be discontinued so as to achieve additional cost savings for your Department. During the course of the investigation we learned that the duties of the mailroom employees do not require a Commercial Driver's License, yet three of the five employees delivering mail in CDPH vehicles are Motor Truck Drivers (MTDs). By contrast, the Department of General Services (now consolidated into the Department of Fleet and Facilities Management) uses Clerks and Unit Assistants to deliver the bulk of inter-departmental mail. Those positions are paid at lower salaries than MTDs.

The IGO recommends that CDPH review whether or not it needs MTDs in order to deliver mail or whether Clerks and Unit Assistants (or some other lower paid position) may be used to perform this function. We estimate that if all five CDPH mailroom employees were compensated at the current rate of the mailroom's Unit Assistant, CDPH could save approximately \$70,000 per year.<sup>3</sup> You may also wish to re-evaluate whether CDPH needs its own mail delivery employees or whether it could use the services of the Department of Fleet and Facilities Management for hard copy mail. There may also be opportunities to replace some hard copy mail with electronic communications and thereby reduce the need for paper mail delivery.

CDPH employees fully cooperated with the IGO throughout the investigation and we commend the department for terminating an inefficient practice following our inquiries. We ask that you respond in writing to the additional recommendations made in this letter within 30 days. This letter and your response will be published on the IGO web site in March. If you have any questions about our findings or recommendations please contact Lise Valentine, Deputy Inspector General for Audit and Program Review at 773-478-7799.

Respectfully,



Joseph M. Ferguson  
Inspector General

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<sup>3</sup> This calculation is made by reducing all five employees' compensation (the budgeted 2012 salaries plus assumed fringe benefit value of 35%) to that of the current mailroom Unit Assistant. This calculation assumes that all five employees would work 35 hours per week as does the Unit Assistant, rather than the 40 hours currently worked by the three Motor Truck Drivers. If it were necessary to replace the 15 hours of work eliminated under this scenario, the savings would be reduced from roughly \$70,000 to \$40,000.