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### **Mistakes in Booter Scheduling Waste Approximately \$320,000 Over Two Years**

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (IGO) released a report on the Chicago Department of Finance's (DOF) "vehicle immobilization program," better known as the "boot program."

The investigation revealed that, as of late 2009 through December 2011, the DOF Street Operations division (formerly the Department of Revenue) failed to appropriately schedule and staff its booters' night shifts. As a result, the department wasted at least 30 minutes of available booting time per employee each night, for an estimated annual loss of \$160,000, due to a combination of lost boot revenue and wasted personnel expenditures.

IGO interviews with DOF employees established that when the DOF Street Operations division first created the night shift in November 2009, no dispatchers—employed by the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) and housed at the Office of Emergency Management and Communications—were available for the night shift. In response, DOF managers assigned the dispatch functions, traditionally performed by union personnel, to higher-paid, non-union security personnel, leaving the night shift as the only booting shift without a roving security element. Moreover, the booters' shift did not align with the dispatchers' shift, meaning that the dispatch services necessary for booting operations were not available for the entire night shift.

To address this problem, DOF managers instructed all booters and dispatchers to take their lunch and breaks at the same time—at the end of their shifts. This arrangement wasted at least 30 minutes of the total number of hours available for booting. The arrangement also required booters and dispatchers to work approximately six hours straight without taking official breaks, presenting potential safety risks for booters, and, in the case of non-union dispatchers, constitutes an apparent violation of state labor laws.

Additionally, given the strong likelihood that booters may in fact need, and therefore take, additional breaks before their late-scheduled lunch period, there was a strong potential for additional lost booting time and lost booting revenue. In fact, the IGO's analysis of night shift booters' activity and log sheets for September through December 2010 revealed that, while the shift ran from 9:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., the number of boots applied dropped by approximately half beginning 2 ½ hours before the end of the shift, and virtually no boots were applied during the last two hours of the shift.

The IGO recommended that DOF take the following three steps necessary to ensure each of the issues identified with the night shift are resolved:

- 1) Review the staffing for the booting night shift and work with DSS to ensure that dispatchers are available for the entire night shift.
- 2) Ensure that security personnel are available to the night shift and able to perform their assigned security functions as appropriate.
- 3) Ensure that all employees working the night shift are able to take necessary breaks throughout their shifts in accordance with state labor laws.

Finally, the IGO recommended that the Department of Human Resources (DHR) conduct a position audit of the parking revenue security supervisor working during the night shift to ensure that this individual is performing the duties of his given position or to reclassify the position. The IGO issued a separate report to DOF making disciplinary recommendations for relevant employees.

City Comptroller Amer Ahmad's response, which has also been published on the IGO website, noted that he has since instructed booting personnel to adhere to an appropriate, staggered, break and lunch schedule. The Comptroller noted that additional dispatcher staffing cannot be added without DSS, and, in the absence of DSS dispatchers, DOF has fully implemented a wireless, automated confirmation system. The Comptroller reported that this automated system was fully operational in October 2011, and the department continues to rely on a Parking Revenue Security Supervisor for temporary dispatch services in cases of an unexpected, system malfunction.

"I want to thank the City Comptroller and his staff for their quick response to our investigation," said Inspector General Joe Ferguson. "Their actions have helped stem the immediate waste of City resources. It also demonstrates to taxpayers how the City departments can the IGO's work to identify and implement management reforms that result in both meaningful savings and more efficient delivery of services."

The full report can be found online at the IGO website: [www.chicagoinpectorgeneral.org](http://www.chicagoinpectorgeneral.org). Follow the IGO on Twitter @ChicagoIGO for the latest information on how the IGO continues to fight waste, fraud, abuse, and inefficiency in Chicago government.

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