

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
City of Chicago



***INSPECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE ADVISORY
CONCERNING
TIME WASTED BY SANITATION LABORERS IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF STREETS AND SANITATION***

JUNE 6, 2013

866-IG-TIPLINE (866-448-4754)
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OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
City of Chicago

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

June 6, 2013

Charles L. Williams
Commissioner
Department of Streets and Sanitation
121 N. LaSalle Street, Room 700
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I would like to apprise you of evidence my office collected in an investigation into waste by sanitation laborers. We are not making specific disciplinary or administrative recommendations as the evidence was gathered prior to the implementation of the new system. Instead, we are offering you the synopsis below on the chance you find it useful as you manage the City's transition to the new grid garbage collection system.

An investigation by the Office of Inspector General (IGO) revealed that the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) sanitation laborers working out of the DSS facility located at 1756 West 74th Street (the "74th Street Ward Yard" or the "Ward Yard")¹ were not engaged in work activity for significant portions of their shifts. This behavior was consistent with the IGO's published findings in our 2008 report on waste and falsification by the City's garbage truck crews.²

After receiving a complaint that sanitation laborers were returning to the 74th Street Ward Yard prior to the end of their shift and not engaging in City-related work, the IGO conducted four separate surveillances of that Ward Yard during 2011 and 2012. During three of those surveillances, the IGO observed the following activity:³

- On March 30, 2011, three sanitation laborers sat in their personal vehicles during the last 30 minutes of their shift—one of the laborers was reading a newspaper;⁴ the IGO also

¹ The 74th Street Ward Yard was the center of operations for the 15th and 18th Ward's refuse collection efforts at all times relevant to the IGO's investigation. The 15th Ward sanitation laborers who work out of the Ward Yard are supervised by the 15th Ward Ward Superintendent and the 18th Ward sanitation laborers are supervised by the 18th Ward Ward Superintendent.

² Available at <http://chicagoinspectorgeneral.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Sanitation-Report.pdf>.

³ The IGO did not observe any waste during the fourth surveillance.

⁴ The IGO identified these laborers by recording the license plate number of the vehicle he or she was in and then determining to whom that vehicle was registered.

saw several other individuals who appeared to be sanitation laborers sitting in their vehicles;⁵

- On August 3, 2011, two sanitation laborers sat in their personal vehicles during the last 30 to 45 minutes of their shift—another laborer was standing just outside a vehicle watching television on a screen located inside that vehicle, which was registered to another sanitation laborer who worked at the Ward Yard;
- On May 23, 2012, three sanitation laborers sat in their personal vehicles during the last 30 to 45 minutes of their shift.

As part of its investigation, the IGO also interviewed three sanitation laborers who worked out of the Ward Yard.⁶ During those interviews, the laborers admitted that they generally arrive back at the Ward Yard 30 to 45 minutes before the end of their shift and “hang out” until their shift is over. One of the sanitation laborers told the IGO he reads in his car at the beginning of his shift while he is waiting for the MTD to arrive at the Ward Yard, and also at the end of his shift after he returns to the Ward Yard. A different sanitation laborer told the IGO that instead of prepping alleys (e.g., sweeping the alleys or placing refuse that is on the ground into carts) or completing “in-between load assignments” (tasks assigned by the Ward Superintendent such as picking up garbage in medians or under bridges), he and another laborer often sit in his car for an hour and a half during the middle of their shift waiting for the MTD to return from the dump. All of the laborers stated that the sanitation laborers working out of the Ward Yard rarely receive in-between load assignments from their Ward Superintendent.

The IGO interviewed one of the two Ward Superintendents operating out of the 74th Street Ward Yard. The Ward Superintendent acknowledged that he sees sanitation laborers sitting in their cars at the end of their shifts a couple of times a week. The Ward Superintendent said the laborers do not have assignments at the end of the day because there “is only so much you can shovel or sweep around the ward yard.” In addition, although the Ward Superintendent claimed that he did give in-between load assignments, he could not explain (1) why the DSS Daily Report Refuse Collection sheets (“Daily Truck Sheets”) for the four days the IGO conducted surveillances did not reflect any such assignments,⁷ or (2) why the sanitation laborers the IGO interviewed said they rarely received such assignments.

As noted above, the IGO is aware that the actions described in this advisory took place prior to the 15th and 18th Wards’ transition to the grid collection system. However, this matter is being brought to your attention in the hopes that it is useful to you and your staff as you manage the new grid system, or should you want to conduct a review of DSS garbage truck crews and supervision systems to ensure these issues do not continue.

⁵ These unidentified individuals walked into the Ward Yard near the end of the sanitation laborers’ shift and then returned to their personal vehicles, but the IGO was unable to obtain the license plate numbers of those vehicles to determine if they were registered to City employees.

⁶ Two of the laborers worked in the 18th Ward and the other laborer worked in the 15th Ward.

⁷ According to DSS, in-between load assignments are to be noted in the “Remarks” section of the Daily Truck Sheets.

The IGO invites DSS to respond in writing before July 8. Your response will be published with this advisory letter on the IGO website.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Ferguson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joseph M. Ferguson
Inspector General
City of Chicago

CITY OF CHICAGO OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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To Suggest Ways to Improve City Government	Visit our website: https://chicagoinspectorgeneral.org/get-involved/help-improve-city-government/
To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in City Programs	Call the IGO's toll-free hotline 866-IG-TIPLINE (866-448-4754). Talk to an investigator from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. Or visit our website: http://chicagoinspectorgeneral.org/get-involved/fight-waste-fraud-and-abuse/

MISSION

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (IGO) is an independent, nonpartisan oversight agency whose mission is to promote economy, efficiency, and integrity in the administration of programs and operations of City government. The IGO achieves this mission through:

- Administrative and criminal investigations
- Audits of City programs and operations
- Reviews of City programs, operations, and policies

From these activities, the IGO issues reports of findings, and disciplinary and other recommendations to assure that City officials, employees, and vendors are held accountable for the provision of efficient, cost-effective government operations and further to prevent, detect, identify, expose and eliminate waste, inefficiency, misconduct, fraud, corruption, and abuse of public authority and resources.

AUTHORITY

The authority to produce reports and recommendations on ways to improve City operations is established in the City of Chicago Municipal Code § 2-56-030(c), which confers upon the Inspector General the following power and duty:

To promote economy, efficiency, effectiveness and integrity in the administration of the programs and operations of the city government by reviewing programs, identifying any inefficiencies, waste and potential for misconduct therein, and recommending to the mayor and the city council policies and methods for the elimination of inefficiencies and waste, and the prevention of misconduct.