

FEBRUARY 2020

CITY OF CHICAGO OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

ADVISORY CONCERNING THE CHICAGO FIRE
DEPARTMENT'S AND CHICAGO POLICE
DEPARTMENT'S FAILURES TO UTILIZE THE
BIOMETRIC COMPONENT OF THE CITY'S
TIMEKEEPING SYSTEM





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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot
121 North LaSalle Street, 4th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear Mayor Lightfoot:

We write to bring to your attention concerns regarding the Chicago Fire Department's (CFD) and Chicago Police Department's (CPD) failure to utilize the biometric component of the City's timekeeping system. Specifically, an OIG investigation found that neither CFD nor CPD enroll their employees in the City's biometric timekeeping system. The biometric component of the respective electronic timekeeping systems helps ensure that an employee is physically present when he or she clocks in for work, thus reducing the risk of time falsification and absenteeism.

In contrast to CFD and CPD, the vast majority of City departments require a new employee, at or around the time of their hiring, to have their hand scanned at City Hall to enroll in the biometric timekeeping system. A three-dimensional image of the hand is then converted to an electronic template which is stored with the user's ID number in a database.¹ Thereafter, in order to clock in or out for a given day, an employee must swipe their ID card at a biometric hand scanner time clock ("Time Clock") or punch in their ID number on the Time Clock's numeric keypad and then place their hand on the Time Clock's hand scanner. According to the Time Clock user manual, the Time Clock compares the scanned hand "with the stored user's unique template. If the images match, the [Time Clock] records the transaction for processing." Thus, the requirement of a hand scan prevents City employees from improperly clocking in or out for each other.

Although both CFD and CPD have rules regarding timekeeping that direct their employees to place their hands on the Time Clock's hand scanner after swiping their ID cards, see CFD General Order 18-005(V)(B)(I) & CPD Department Notice D17-

¹ According to a "Biometric Hand Scanner Training Guide" created for the City: "The biometric hand geometry used by the time clock contains no private information and since the hand is measured from the top down, there is no way whatsoever to collect or store any fingerprint data so privacy and security is guaranteed."

06(V)(E)(2)², neither CFD nor CPD enroll their employees in the biometric component of the City's timekeeping system by having their hands scanned when first entered into the system. As a result, following the swipe of a CFD or CPD employee's ID card or the manual entry of a CFD or CPD employee's ID number, the Time Clock will accept the scan of any hand that is placed on its scanner, even if it is not the hand of the person whose ID card was swiped or ID number was entered. Accordingly, CFD and CPD employees do not have to be physically present to successfully clock in or out.

OIG had two CFD employees separately swipe their ID cards at a Time Clock located at CFD's 3510 South Michigan headquarters. On each occasion, an OIG employee placed their hand, instead of the CFD employees', on the Time Clock's hand scanner. The Time Clock nevertheless registered the clock-ins as valid. Similarly, OIG had a CPD employee swipe their ID card at a Time Clock at CPD headquarters, also located at 3510 South Michigan. Then, an OIG employee placed their hand on the Time Clock's scanner instead of the CPD employee. The Time Clock still registered the clock-in as valid. Therefore, for CFD and CPD employees, the hand scan "requirement" currently serves no functional purpose and provides no meaningful deterrent to time falsification.

Based on its findings, OIG recommends that both CFD and CPD require their employees to be enrolled in the biometric component of the City's timekeeping system. Absent such enrollment, CFD's and CPD's current directives are pointless, and there is an obvious risk that does not comport with the City's expressed interest in reducing time falsification and absenteeism.

We ask that you inform us of any actions that the Department takes in response to these recommendations. Any such response will be made public along with this advisory.

Respectfully,



Joseph M. Ferguson
Inspector General
City of Chicago

cc: Reshma Soni, Comptroller, Department of Finance
Eddie Johnson, Superintendent, Chicago Police Department

² The CPD Department Notice notes that "At this time, members do not have to place their right hand ON the card reader platform or make contact with the finger pins. The readers are not capturing any biometric data or fingerprints."

Richard C. Ford II, Commissioner, Chicago Fire Department
Soo Choi, Commissioner, Department of Human Resources
Susie Park, Budget Director, Office of Budget and Management
Tamika Puckett, Chief Risk Officer, Office of the Mayor
Maurice Classen, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor

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- administrative and criminal investigations by its Investigations Section;
- performance audits of City programs and operations by its Audit and Program Review Section;
- inspections, evaluations and reviews of City police and police accountability programs, operations, and policies by its Public Safety Section; and
- compliance audit and monitoring of City hiring and employment activities by its Hiring Oversight Unit.

From these activities, OIG issues reports of findings and disciplinary and other recommendations to assure that City officials, employees, and vendors are held accountable for violations of laws and policies; to improve the efficiency, cost-effectiveness government operations and further to prevent, detect, identify, expose and eliminate waste, inefficiency, misconduct, fraud, corruption, and abuse of public authority and resources.

AUTHORITY

OIG's authority to produce reports of its findings and recommendations is established in the City of Chicago Municipal Code §§ 2-56-030(d), -035(c), -110, -230, and 240.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES:

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