

November 27, 2017

Dani Galloway, Interim Director
Department of Public Works
City of New Orleans
1300 Perdido Street, Room 6W03
New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

This correspondence is part of an ongoing investigation, examination, audit, inspection, or performance review and is exempt from the Public Records Act until the investigation, examination, audit, inspection, or performance review is complete. See La. R.S. 33:9614 and La. R.S. 44:4.1(B)(18). Please notify this office immediately should you receive a Public Records Request which includes this correspondence.

Re: Sewerage & Water Board Employees are utilizing handicap hang-tags to park for free in metered spaces on Saint Joseph Street

Dear Ms. Galloway:

The City of New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) has completed an investigation/review concerning an allegation that able-bodied Sewerage & Water Board (S&WB) employees display handicap hang-tags in their personal vehicles, which enables them to park for free in metered parking spaces adjacent to the S&WB main office at 625 Saint Joseph Street.

The OIG contacted the City of New Orleans Americans with Disabilities Act Administrator Page McCranie and the Louisiana State Police regarding the issuance and proper use of handicap hang-tags. According to these sources, handicap hang-tags are distributed by the State Police, Division of Motor Vehicles office. These hang-tags may be issued to those with permanent or temporary disabilities. A person to whom a handicap hang-tag has been issued should also possess a handicap ID card. This number appears on the handicap hang-tag. Vehicles bearing a handicap hang-tag issued to a mobility-impaired person or person with disabilities that are being operated for the transport of the mobility-impaired person or person with disabilities can park in a metered parking space for up to three (3) hours without payment¹. According to Parking Division Manager Katrina Craft, these individuals can also purchase an additional two (2) hours of parking.

¹ Refer to Appendix 1, City Code, § 154-1093.

Over the course of two (2) days, OIG investigators found forty (40) vehicles bearing a handicap hang-tag parked in metered parking spaces in the immediate vicinity of the S&WB Office located at 625 Saint Joseph Street. Thirty-seven (37) of these vehicles were registered to S&WB employees or their relatives. Eleven (11) of these thirty-seven (37) S&WB employees were authorized to possess a handicap hang-tag. The twenty-six (26) S&WB employees who were NOT authorized to possess a handicap hang-tag can be subdivided into the following categories:

- Twelve (12) S&WB employees have a relative who is authorized to possess a handicap hang-tag, but they are not.
- Fourteen (14) employees were using a handicap hang-tag that does not belong to a relative. Of these fourteen (14) handicap hang-tags, nine (9) were either invalid or unreadable.

During these visits, OIG investigators also observed that none of the vehicles bearing a handicap hang-tag had received a parking ticket for parking beyond the allotted three hours. Thirty-one (31) of these vehicles bearing a handicap hang-tag displayed a parking receipt dispensed by a parking kiosk, but the amount of the receipt was usually a nickel, which is valid for only one (1) minute of parking. In some instances, S&WB employees leave their vehicles parked in metered parking spaces for the entire duration of their work shift.

Consequently, the thirty-seven (37) above-described S&WB employees may be depriving the City of approximately \$197,000 per year in parking meter revenue because twenty-six (26) are not entitled to any handicap parking privileges, while the other eleven (11) who legitimately possess a handicap hang-tag are exceeding the three-hour free parking benefit. Refer to Figure 1 as shown below.

Figure 1: Potential Lost Parking Meter Revenue per Year

	Legitimately possess a handicap hang-tag	Do not legitimately possess a handicap hang-tag	Total
# of Employees	11	26	
X Hours per day ²	5 hours ³	8 hours	
X Hourly Rate ⁴	\$3.00	\$3.00	
X Working Days per Year ⁵	250 days	250 days	
Potential Lost Parking Meter Revenue per Year	\$41,250	\$156,000	\$197,250

In addition to the potentially lost revenue, S&WB customers may be unable to park in a metered parking space near the S&WB Office because S&WB employees occupy those spaces.

S&WB management and other City departments should advise their employees that:

1. All employees must pay the metered rate, and vehicles with insufficient meter time will be ticketed.
2. Employees improperly using handicap hang-tags to park in metered parking spaces will be ticketed.
3. Any vehicle bearing a handicap hang-tag that remains in a metered parking space beyond the three-hour free parking benefit without paying for additional time up to the two (2) hour limit will be ticketed.

In addition, Parking Control officers should monitor vehicles parked in metered spaces including those bearing handicap hang-tags in the vicinity of the S&WB Office and those parked on St. Charles Avenue for potential violations. Parking Control officers should be aware of vehicles bearing handicap hang-tags that exceed the three-hour free parking benefit without paying for additional time up to the two hour limit and those with insufficient meter time.

² Operating hours for the meters are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday-Saturday. However, the S&WB employees work an eight-hour shift, including lunch.

³ Valid handicap hang-tag holders receive three hours of free parking and can also purchase an additional 2 hours of parking.

⁴ The on-street parking meter rate in the Warehouse District is \$3.00 per hour.

⁵ Five days per week x 52 weeks – 10 holidays = 250 working days per year.

The OIG is referring this matter for your review and consideration. Please take whatever action you deem appropriate.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,



Howard Schwartz

Interim Inspector General

City of New Orleans

Office of Inspector General

cc: Rebecca H. Dietz, City Attorney
Jeff Hebert, Chief Administrative Officer
Bruce Adams, S&WB Deputy General Superintendent

Sec. 154-1093. - Use by mobility-impaired/disabilities.

When a motor vehicle bearing a plate or displaying a hang tag or a special *parking* card issued to a mobility-impaired person or person with disabilities in conformance with state regulations is being operated for the transport of the mobility-impaired person or person with disabilities, the motor vehicle may be parked for a period of up to a maximum of three hours without payment, regardless of meter fares otherwise applicable to the *parking* space. This provision shall apply except as restricted or prohibited by ordinance, or where *parking* is prohibited by ordinance or police on a roadway for the purpose of creating a fire lane or for the accommodation of heavy traffic during morning, afternoon, or evening hours or where the motor vehicle is parked in such a manner as to clearly be a traffic hazard.

The city shall recognize hang tags, special *parking* cards, or other removable windshield placards and special license plates which have been issued by authorities of other states and countries for the purpose of identifying vehicles transporting a mobility-impaired person or person with disabilities. Additionally, special registration of the vehicle license shall be recognized in the OPS.

(M.C.S., Ord. No. 23215, § 1, 9-11-08; M.C.S., Ord. No. 26070, § 2, 10-2-14)

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