

14-C-5025

A COMMUNICATION FROM FRED WILLIAMS, CHAIR, AUDIT COMMITTEE TO MAYOR KASIM RED, PRESIDENT OF CEASAR C. MITCHELL AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL, SUBMITTING A PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS SOLID WASTE SAFETY PRACTICES.

Filed By
MAY 05 2014
Council

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 - REGULAR REPORT REFER
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 - 1ST ADOPT 2ND READ & REFER
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- Date Referred: 4/21/14
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Committee Date Chair Action Fav, Adv, Hold (see rev. side) Other Members	Committee Date Chair Action Fav, Adv, Hold (see rev. side) Other Members

FINAL COUNCIL ACTION
 2nd 1st & 2nd 3rd
Readings
 Consent V Vote RC Vote

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 MAY 05 2014
 ALLANIA CITY CLERK PRESIDENT

CERTIFIED
 MAY 05 2014
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MAYOR'S ACTION

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5/05/14
2:54 PM

Atlanta City Council

14-C-5025

AUDIT REPORT FOR DEPT OF PUBLIC WORKS

FILE

YEAS: 11
NAYS: 0
ABSTENTIONS: 0
NOT VOTING: 5
EXCUSED: 0
ABSENT 0

NV Smith	Y Archibong	Y Moore	Y Bond
Y Hall	Y Wan	Y Martin	NV Norwood
NV Young	Y Shook	Y Bottoms	Y Dickens
NV Winslow	Y Adrean	Y Sheperd	NV Mitchell

14-C-5025



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CITY OF ATLANTA

LESLIE WARD
City Auditor
lward1@atlantaga.gov

AMANDA NOBLE
Deputy City Auditor
anoble@atlantaga.gov

CITY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

68 MITCHELL STREET SW, SUITE 12100
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-0312
(404) 330-6452
FAX: (404) 658-6077

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Fred Williams, CPA, Chair
Donald T. Penovi, CPA, Vice Chair
Marion Cameron, CPA
C.O. Hollis, Jr., CPA, CIA
Ex-Officio: Mayor Kasim Reed

TO: Mayor Reed, President Mitchell, and City Council members

FROM: Fred Williams *Fred Williams*
Chair, Audit Committee

DATE: April 16, 2014

SUBJECT: Performance Audit: Department of Public Works - Solid Waste Safety Practices

The report listed above is attached for your review. Feel free to contact Leslie Ward, City Auditor, if you have questions or want to discuss the report.

Cc:

Michael Geisler, Interim Chief Operating Officer, Mayor's Office
Hans Utz, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Mayor's Office
Thomas Weyandt, Jr., Senior Transportation Policy Advisor
Kristin Wilson, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Mayor's Office
Candace Byrd, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Katrina Taylor, Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Carlos Campos, Director of Communications, Mayor's Office
Anne Torres, Deputy Director of Communications, Mayor's Office
Melissa Mullinax, Office of Communications, Mayor's Office
David Bennett, Senior Policy Advisor, Mayor's Office
Cathy Hampton, City Attorney
Peter Andrews, Deputy City Attorney
Richard Mendoza, Commissioner of Public Works
Rita Braswell, Public Works Administrative Program Manager
I David Daniels, Executive Director of Safety
Yvonne Cowser Yancy, Commissioner of Human Resources
J. Anthony Beard, Chief Financial Officer
Gwendolyn Smith, Deputy Chief Financial Officer
John Gaffney, Controller, Department of Finance

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April 16, 2014

Performance Audit: Department of Public Works - Solid Waste Safety Practices

Nina Hickson, Ethics Officer

Rhonda Dauphin Johnson, Municipal Clerk

Tangela Williams, Director, Council Staff

Dexter Chambers, Director, City Council Office of Communications

Alfred Berry, Jr., Policy Analyst

Audit Committee

**Performance Audit:
Department of Public Works
Solid Waste Safety Practices**

April 2014

**City Auditor's Office
City of Atlanta**

File #13.07



CITY OF ATLANTA
City Auditor's Office
Leslie Ward, City Auditor
404.330.6452

April 2014

Why We Did This Audit

Our analysis of workers' compensation data suggested that targeted efforts to improve training, supervision, and use of protective equipment could reduce the number and cost of injury claims. The Department of Public Works had the highest number of claims per 100 full-time employees in the city.

What We Recommended

To improve the safety culture in solid waste and to help reduce injuries, the commissioner of public works should:

- Draft legislation for city council consideration to discontinue allowing customers to use non city-issued cans.
- Revise job descriptions for laborers and operators to indicate the weight that candidates should be able to lift repetitively.
- Establish disciplinary actions for safety violations and incorporate compliance with safety procedures in performance appraisals.

To support department and citywide safety efforts, the city's executive director of safety should:

- Document required safety training in a written policy and work with departments to ensure that all employees receive required training.
- Develop a structured safety training program that includes clear hiring criteria, is developed and delivered in compliance with the city's safety-related training policy, and provides for ongoing and post-accident training.

The commissioner of human resources should:

- Document the designation of safety-sensitive positions through written communications to facilitate accurate information and ongoing implementation of drug testing efforts.
- Conduct random drug and alcohol testing of all solid waste employees quarterly, consistent with best practices.

For more information regarding this report, please contact Stephanie Jackson at 404.330.6678 or sjackson@atlantaga.gov

Performance Audit:

Department of Public Works

Solid Waste Safety Practices

What We Found

The number of injuries among solid waste collectors and drivers is high. Our September 2013 audit of workers' compensation found that the number of claims reported by city employees was much higher than the national average for local governments. Public works employees accounted for 22% of the overall claims filed by city employees from fiscal year 2010 through March 2013, and solid waste employees accounted for 83% of public works' total claims.

Employees told us that management emphasizes completing garbage routes and makes safety a lower priority. We observed collection crews using unsafe collection techniques while on routes, including:

- jumping on and off garbage trucks while the trucks were moving
- using cell phones and headphones, and smoking while collecting garbage
- failing to hold on to truck handrails and keep both feet on the platforms while the trucks were in motion
- rolling herbie curbies in front of oncoming cars
- serving both sides of the street in heavy traffic
- using poor lifting techniques

Risk of injury could also be increased because city residents may use non-city-issued cans, which require more lifting and limit the efficiency gained by using semi-automated pick-up methods.

Solid waste has no written policy that describes consequences for employees who violate safety procedures and has no written policy for safety training requirements. Some employees have not had safety training in over a year. Although solid waste officials told us that they have disciplined employees for violating safety procedures, management was unable to provide records of any corrective action taken.

Human resources conducted random drug and alcohol testing once a year during 2012 and 2013. One or more employees tested positive for alcohol or drugs in each year.

Management Responses to Audit Recommendations

Summary of Management Responses

Recommendation #1:	The commissioner of public works should draft legislation for city council consideration to establish a weight limit for herbie curbies and to discontinue allowing customers to use non city-issued cans.	
Response & Proposed Action:	Will draft legislation to add "32 gallon container" to Code 130-36-7(6)(d)	Partially Agree
Timeframe:	May 2014 based on legislative time frame	
Recommendation #2:	The commissioner of public works should revise the job descriptions to include the physical requirements for laborers and operators to indicate the weight that candidates should be able to lift at least repetitively.	
Response & Proposed Action:	Will revise job descriptions to add the ability to lift a minimum of 35 lbs to SWS positions and a test requirement on the pre-employment physical.	Agree
Timeframe:	April 1, 2014	
Recommendation #3:	The commissioner of public works should develop procedures that outline what actions the Department of Public Works will take to discipline employees who violate safety procedures. Public works should keep documentation of corrective actions taken in a location that is easily accessible.	
Response & Proposed Action:	Will use the current PPB on PPE and incident policy and city vehicle use policy. Written violations will be kept at person's sub-stations.	Partially Agree
Timeframe:	April 1, 2014	
Recommendation #4:	The commissioner of public works should incorporate employees' compliance with safety procedures in annual performance appraisals.	
Response & Proposed Action:	Will add a Critical Job Element to job performance with ratings based on number of occurrences.	Agree
Timeframe:	July 1, 2014	
Recommendation #5:	The commissioner of human resources should conduct random drug and alcohol testing of all solid waste employees on a quarterly basis, consistent with best practices.	
Response & Proposed Action:	Testing will be implemented quarterly within solid waste in addition to the ongoing testing across other city departments.	Agree
Timeframe:	April 2014	
Recommendation #6:	The commissioner of human resources should document the designation of safety-sensitive positions through written communications to facilitate accurate information and ongoing implementation of drug testing efforts.	
Response & Proposed Action:	Will provide written notice to respective departments concerning the designation of safety-sensitive positions that have been identified for testing.	Agree
Timeframe:	April 2014	
Recommendation #7:	The executive director of safety should determine the safety training courses, including any refreshers, that employees should receive and incorporate it into a written policy. The executive director should work with the public works department to ensure that all employees receive required training.	
Response & Proposed Action:	Develop "Safety Related Training Profiles" for all Solid Waste positions in coordination with the Citywide Workplace Safety Committee policies.	Agree
Timeframe:	July 2014	
Recommendation #8:	The executive director of safety should develop a structured safety training program that includes clear hiring criteria, is developed and delivered in compliance with the city's safety related training policy where applicable, provides for ongoing training, and includes post-accident training.	
Response & Proposed Action:	Develop a training calendar utilizing the SRTPs for DPW Solid Waste Division with necessary safety related training.	Agree
Timeframe:	July 2014	



CITY OF ATLANTA

LESLIE WARD
City Auditor
lward1@atlantaga.gov

AMANDA NOBLE
Deputy City Auditor
anoble@atlantaga.gov

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68 MITCHELL STREET SW, SUITE 12100
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-0312
(404) 330-6452
FAX: (404) 658-6077

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Fred Williams, CPA, Chair
Donald T. Penovi, CPA, Vice Chair
Marion Cameron, CPA
C.O. Hollis, Jr., CPA, CIA
Ex-Officio: Mayor Kasim Reed

April 21, 2014

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

This audit builds on the work we did in our audit of workers' compensation, released in September 2013. In that report we concluded that targeted efforts to improve training, supervision, and the use of protective equipment could help to reduce the volume and cost of injury claims. Because public works had the highest number of claims per 100 full-time employees in the city and most of the department's claims were within the Office of Solid Waste, we looked in depth at safety practices in the office.

Our observations of collection crews, interviews, and review of available records indicate a weak safety culture. Our recommendations focus on organizational efforts to improve workplace safety in the Office of Solid Waste but are also applicable citywide. The commissioner of human resources and the executive director of safety agreed with the recommendations we made to them. The commissioner of public works agreed with two recommendations but only partially agreed with two others. The commissioner states in his responses that certain portions of his department's policies and the city's code of ordinances are adequate and do not require the revisions we suggest. The policy documents in question are attached as Appendix B.

The Audit Committee has reviewed this report and is releasing it in accordance with Article 2, Chapter 6 of the City Charter. We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation of city staff throughout the audit. The team for this project was Kwasi Obeng, Jamie Amos, Brad Garvey, and Stephanie Jackson.

Leslie Ward
City Auditor

Fred Williams
Audit Committee Chair

Solid Waste Safety Practices

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Introduction

This audit assesses the safety practices of the Department of Public Works' Office of Solid Waste. Our September 2013 audit of workers' compensation found that public works employees accounted for 22% of the overall claims filed by city employees from fiscal year 2010 through March 2013. Public works' employees filed 979 claims - the second highest number of workers' compensation claims in the city. At 36.9 percent, the department also had the highest number of claims per 100 full-time employees. Its employees also had the highest number of repeat injury claims; employees who filed repeat claims filed a total of 720 claims.

Solid waste employees reported 813 (83%) of public works' 979 total claims. The number of repeat claims among solid waste employees was also high. About 51% of the solid waste claims were filed by employees who filed more than one claim during the 45 months we reviewed; 418 of 813 claims were filed by employees who filed more than one claim.

Background

The Office of Solid Waste is responsible for collecting and disposing of residential and commercial solid waste within the city limits. The office collects household garbage, recycling, and yard trimmings once a week and bulk waste once a month. Solid waste is also responsible for sweeping streets, removing and disposing of dead animals when needed, enforcing lawn maintenance codes, and assisting in citywide emergency operations.

The office carries out its waste collection functions from three main facilities - Chester Avenue, Lakewood Avenue, and Maddox Park. The Lakewood and Maddox facilities manage household garbage, yard trimming, and recycling operations. The Chester facility handles special operations, which include bulk rubbish, animal collection, and street cleaning.

Solid waste has 348 staff, including 174 waste collectors, 153 drivers, and 21 supervisors. The staff consists of regular, temporary, and extra help positions.

**LARGE
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OR
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