

# CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

ED QUATREVAUX, INSPECTOR GENERAL



October 11, 2016

Jeffrey Hebert  
Chief Administrative Officer  
City of New Orleans  
1300 Perdido Street  
New Orleans, LA

Mark Jernigan  
Director, Department of Public Works  
City of New Orleans  
1300 Perdido Street  
New Orleans, LA

Re: Erroneous Parking Citations

Dear CAO Hebert and Director Jernigan,

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) received information from several sources that citizens received erroneous parking citations. In fact, local citizens also advised that parking citations were issued to the wrong individuals. The OIG reviewed thousands of issued citations, spoke with victims, City employees, and the City parking contractor Duncan Solutions. The OIG confirmed that thousands of individuals received parking citations in error. Parking Enforcement Officers (PEOs) mistakenly entered either the wrong license plate numbers or the wrong Administrative Hearing Dates onto parking citations. The registered owner of the vehicle listed in the citation is ultimately responsible. The actual vehicle in violation, as shown in Photo 1 was not held responsible. The citation in Photo 2 should have been issued to the vehicle depicted in Photo 1, Louisiana License Plate YHU. However the PEO transposed the U for the H, therefore the owner of license plate YUH was financially responsible for a parking violation not committed.



Photo 1

CITATION # <b>61689</b>			
Date	Time Issued	Administrative Hearing Date	
04/03/2016	09:45AM	04/26/16 08:30AM - NOON	
THE ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING DATE IS YOUR DATE FOR A HEARING. YOU MAY CONTEST AT ANY TIME ON OR BEFORE THIS DATE. SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION			
State	Plate Number	Year	
LA	<b>YUH</b>	2016	
Vehicle Identification Number			
Vehicle Make	Color	Beat	URDL
HOND	GY	107	R
Location		Meter No	
600 ST. PETER STREET			
VIOLATION			
<b>154.977</b>			
<b>NO STOPPING ANYTIME</b>			
Fine	1st Penalty After 30 Days	2nd Penalty After 60 Days	
\$40.00	\$80.00	\$160.00	
The Officer below being duly sworn, upon oath deposes and says that in the City of New Orleans, Louisiana, the vehicle described above was observed in violation of the City of New Orleans Parking code specified herein and a copy of this notice was served upon the vehicle as required by law.			
Officer	Agency	Badge No.	
Comments:			
<b>Sign Posted - No Activity / Unattended</b>			
<b>NO STOPPING ANYTIME</b>			
<b>DROVE OFF</b>			

Photo 2

Citizens can contest inaccurate parking citations by filing a complaint at the Administrative Hearing Center (AHC) in person, by U.S. Mail, or online. All citations provide an Administrative Hearing Date when the citizen may contest the citation in person with the PEO present. The AHC had approximately 5 City employees including the Adjudication Administrator who answered the phones and met with citizens. The AHC also employed 2 to 3 Hearing Officers on contract to conduct hearings for persons who wished to contest their parking citations.

#### **CITY ISSUED APPROXIMATELY 8,900 CITATIONS IN ERROR**

The City issued approximately 4,000 parking citations each year with Vehicle Make and Model errors that are dismissed.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, the PEO input the wrong information on the citation, and placed it on the vehicle in violation. The most common error was a misplaced number or letter (See Photos 1 and 2). If the owner of the vehicle in violation did not pay the citation prior to the Administrative Hearing Date, then the registered owner of the license plate on the citation was held financially responsible for the citation and any late fees and the vehicle could be booted or towed. The registered owner of the vehicle whose license plate number was incorrectly written on the citation then had to contact the AHC and dispute the citation. The process to issue and dismiss a parking citation involves PEOs, Hearing Officers and AHC employees. Factoring in their respective salaries, each dismissal cost the city approximately \$24.65. The annual cost to dismiss parking citations involving Vehicle Make and Model errors is approximately \$99,000.

The City issues approximately 3,000 parking citations each year with Administrative Hearing Date errors.

The OIG had also received complaints from citizens who had received notices for administrative hearing dates that had already passed or would not occur for several years. In fact, citizens have said that they received citations where the hearing date was scheduled prior to the date of issuance. According to the Adjudication Administrator, citations are dismissed if the hearing date is scheduled before the issuance date. The hearing date errors were traced to PEOs manually entering the wrong hearing dates into their handheld citation devices. These errors cost the City approximately \$74,000 a year.

The City issues approximately 1,900 parking citations each year to Fleet Vehicles parked at metered spots that are dismissed.

The term “Fleet Vehicles” refers to commercial delivery vehicles such as UPS trucks, FedEx trucks and restaurant supply trucks. These vehicles are allowed to stop briefly without charge at an empty metered spot so that they can make a delivery. Parking Enforcement Management was unaware of the fact that the Administrative Hearing Center (AHC) dismissed all parking citations

issued to Fleet Vehicles parked at metered spots. The AHC did not dismiss any other type of citation issued to Fleet Vehicles. Because the process to issue and dismiss this type of parking citation only involved PEOs and AHC employees, each dismissal cost the city approximately \$8.78. The annual cost to dismiss parking citations involving Fleet Vehicles parked at metered spots was approximately \$17,000 a year.

**CITATIONS ISSUED IN ERROR COST THE CITY APPROXIMATELY \$190,000**

Make and Model Errors and Administrative Hearing Date Errors affected approximately 7,000 citizens annually. The yearly cost to dismiss these parking citations is approximately \$190,000.<sup>1</sup> Fleet vehicles citation errors affected approximately 1,900 Fleet Vehicles annually. The yearly cost to dismiss these parking citations is approximately \$17,000.<sup>2</sup> The City, by correcting both the Make and Model Errors and Administrative Hearing Date Errors, would now issue 7,000 valid parking citations. The City would gain an immediate annual return of \$210,000 if each citation were for \$30.<sup>3</sup>

The OIG coordinated with Mark D. Jernigan, CNO Director of Public Works (DPW); Richard Boseman, Adjudication Administrator, Adjudication Bureau, DPW; employees of the Parking Enforcement Division (PED) within DPW; managers at the City parking contractor; as well as the complainants to examine these issues.

The OIG identified 2 software changes that the parking management vendor could implement which would prevent the issuing of erroneous citations based upon Make and Model Errors and Fleet Vehicles being ticketed while parked at metered spots. The OIG also identified a software change that would eliminate Administrative Hearing Date Errors.

No late notifications should be sent when the make and model do not match. The parking management vendor should automatically void any parking citation where the information entered on the citation does not match the Division of Motor Vehicles information returned for the license plate number shown on the citation. The parking management vendor should also provide the Director of DPW with a monthly report of all voided citations. This report should include citation number, badge number, and PEO name so that error prone employees can receive proper training.

The Hearing Dates were entered into the handheld citation devices by the PEO at “Roll Call” before their shift started. The parking management vendor should coordinate with the AHC to

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<sup>1</sup> Determined by totaling the savings from Make and Model Errors (\$99,000) and Administrative Hearing Date Errors (\$74,000).

<sup>2</sup> Determined by totaling the cost to dismiss as well as the annual number of citations issued (\$17,000).

<sup>3</sup> Parking Citation violations range from \$30 for parking at an expired meter to \$500 for unlawfully parking in a handicapped zone.

populate the Hearing Date on the handheld citation devices electronically, thereby eliminating the potential for human error.

The contractor should automatically void all Fleet Vehicle parking citations for parking at a metered spot as well as provide a monthly report of voided citations for Fleet Vehicles to the Director of DPW.

To minimize the number of parking citations issued to Fleet Vehicles as well as assist the PEOs in identifying Fleet Vehicles, the AHC should provide a listing of Fleet Vehicles to the PED. This list should be discussed at PEO "Roll Call", distributed amongst the PEOs, and displayed in common areas.

PEOs should be required to take three photographs of the violations. The photographs should include the license plate, front of the vehicle, and the violation itself. These photographs are beneficial to the citizen as well as the PEO. If the recipient disputes the parking citation, a photograph of the violation and vehicle could clarify the matter.

DPW and the City parking contractor both agreed to make the corrections and are developing a path of implementation. The Fleet Vehicle Voids solution has been in place since September 16, 2016 at no cost to the City. The contractor advised that the Make and Model correction will be made in October 2016 at no charge to the City. The contractor also advised that the Hearing Date Error correction should be implemented in October 2016 and at present there will not be a charge to the City.

Greatly reducing the potential for PEO errors would result in fewer overall parking related complaints and would save the City approximately \$190,000 per year and would gain an immediate annual return of \$210,000. By taking these steps the Department of Public Works could prevent 7,000 citizens from receiving erroneous parking citations each year.



E.R. Quatrevaux