

Sewerage & Water Board Employees Fraudulent Utilization of Handicap Hang-tags

February 8, 2022

Introduction

On November 27, 2017, the Office of Inspector General issued a letter to Department of Public Works (DPW) concerning able-bodied Sewerage & Water Board (S&WB) employees who were displaying handicap hang-tags in their personal vehicles, which enabled them to park for free in metered parking spaces adjacent to the S&WB main office at 625 Saint Joseph Street. The Office of Office of Inspector General conducted a follow-up investigation to determine if S&WB employees were currently violating the laws regarding the use of handicap hang-tags.

What the OIG Found

OIG investigators found that 26 vehicles that were registered to a S&WB employee or their relative possessed a handicap hang-tag and parked in a metered parking space in the immediate vicinity of the S&WB Office. These 26 S&WB employees may be depriving the City of approximately \$132,957 per year in parking meter revenue because 19 were not entitled to any handicap parking privileges and the other seven, who legitimately possessed a handicap hang-tag, exceeded the three-hour free parking benefit.

The 19 S&WB employees who were NOT AUTHORIZED to possess a handicap hang-tag were divided into the following categories:

- Eight S&WB employees have a relative who is authorized to possess a handicap hang-tag, but the employee themselves is not.
- Eleven employees were using a handicap hang-tag that does not belong to themselves or a relative, including three employees who were using a handicap hang-tag that was issued to **deceased persons**.

S&WB currently provides free parking to some of its employees in a nearby parking garage. Three of the S&WB employees that improperly used a handicap hang-tag to park for free also have an assigned parking space in a nearby garage at a cost of \$80 per month per employee.

In addition to lost revenue, S&WB customers, including those who are legitimately disabled, are unable to park in a metered parking space near the S&WB Office because S&WB employees, fraudulently utilizing handicap hang-tags, occupy those spaces. Consequently, some customers are double parking in front of the S&WB main office.

What the OIG Recommended

S&WB management and other City &WB management and other City departments should ensure the following:

1. All employees must pay the metered parking rate, and vehicles with insufficient meter time should be ticketed.
2. Employees improperly using handicap hang-tags to park in metered parking spaces should 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 limit should 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 issue citations to vehicles bearing handicap hang-tags that exceed the three-hour free parking benefit without paying for additional time up to the two-hour limit.