

The New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an investigation of Sewerage and Water Board (S&WB) take-home vehicle policies based on allegations that S&WB vehicles were repeatedly driven outside of Orleans Parish.

S&WB vehicles were seen outside of Orleans Parish because in 2014 45 percent of employees with take-home vehicle privileges resided outside of Orleans Parish. Some employees with take-home vehicle privileges lived as far away as Ascension and Livingston Parishes. This practice came at a significant cost; the S&WB spent \$394,388 in fuel and repair costs for all take-home vehicles in 2014.¹ On July 27, 2015, the S&WB reduced the number of employees with take-home vehicles from 110 to 89. However, 48 percent of the employees with take-home vehicle privileges still reside outside of Orleans Parish.

The S&WB vehicle policy required that all take-home vehicle assignments had to be reviewed by the S&WB Vehicle Committee.² Each take-home vehicle recommendation form had to be approved and signed by the Safety Committee Chairman. However, the S&WB did not adhere to the policy because the Safety Committee Chairman did not sign 104 out of 105 forms provided to the OIG.³ The only form that included a signature was completed by the Safety Committee Chairman himself.⁴ On March 15, 2015, the S&WB revised its vehicle policy and eliminated the requirements that forms must be completed by employees, approved by the vehicle committee, and signed by the Safety Committee Chairman.⁵

According to senior S&WB officials, employees are assigned take-home vehicles in order to respond directly to emergencies after normal duty hours. However, the S&WB was unable to provide an accurate count of how many times their employees responded to after-hours emergencies because the S&WB does not

¹ The estimated fuel cost was \$322,128.63 and repair costs were \$72,260.10. However, not all fuel and repair costs were provided by S&WB in time for the release of this report.

² S&WB Policy Memorandum No. 94, Company Vehicle Policy, Revised 08/11.

³ Although 110 employees have take-home vehicle privileges, the S&WB could not find the other five forms.

⁴ However, other parts of the form were incomplete.

⁵ S&WB Policy Memorandum No. 94, Company Vehicle Policy, Revised 03/15.

have a system in place to monitor and review vehicle usage. Although each vehicle is equipped with a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit, senior S&WB officials do not use GPS to track the vehicles on a daily basis.⁶

⁶ According to S&WB officials, GPS units were originally obtained in order to address vehicle misuse complaints.