



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
City of Albuquerque

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DATE: December 23, 2021

SUBJECT: Parking citations not processed prior to dates of fee escalation

FILE NO: 21-0103-C

INVESTIGATOR: Melissa R. Santistevan 

STATUS: Closed

Informative Case Synopsis

Pursuant to City Ordinance 2-17-2, the Inspector General's goals are to: (1) Conduct investigations in an efficient, impartial, equitable and objective manner; (2) Prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse in city activities including all city contracts and partnerships; (3) Deter criminal activity through independence in fact and appearance, investigation and interdiction; and (4) Propose ways to increase the city's legal, fiscal and ethical accountability to insure that tax payers' dollars are spent in a manner consistent with the highest standards of local governments.

On December 21, 2021, the Office of Inspector General "OIG" received information alleging that parking citations are not processed prior to dates of fee escalation allowing the recipient to pay the citation at the lower fee. Upon receiving this complaint, the OIG determined that the allegations did rise to the level of potential fraud, waste or abuse, initiated a case and began a fact-finding investigation.

While conducting our fact-finding investigation, the OIG Investigator researched policies and obtained an understanding of the citation process.

Parking Citations are issued in two ways. Parking Enforcement officer can issue citations and Albuquerque Police Department (APD) can issue parking citations. The process is different based on who issues the citation.

If Parking Enforcement issues the citation, they use a handheld device that transmits the citation to the Parking Divisions database within 3 seconds. Once the transmission has occurred, the citation is available for review online and to be paid at the Parking Division or online.

The recipient of the citation can contest the citation in Metro Court and if they are successful and the citation is “thrown out”, there are no court fees. If the recipient is not successful and the court upholds the citation, the recipient will be liable for all court costs as well as the citation fee. The court fees begin at \$77.00.

If there is a human error related to the citation, such as the vehicle is not registered in the cited recipients name, then the recipient can go to the Parking Department and speak to a Supervisor. If the Supervisor finds that there was an error, the Supervisor can approve resolution.

Each citation has an escalated fee scale. The fee escalation is as follows:

Cited fee if paid within 10 days of issuance

Double cited fee if paid between 10-20 days of issuance

Triple cited fee if paid between 20-30 days of issuance

After 30 days the citation is turned over to Metro Court and a warrant is issued for the recipient and parking is removed from the process as it has become a legal matter.

If Albuquerque Police Department (APD) issues the citation, it is handwritten by the officer. A copy of the handwritten citation is turned into the substation and the substation turns all citations into the Main APD office. Each day, Parking goes to APD to check the box for citations. Parking collects all citations from APD and manually enters them into the Parking database. The escalation fees remain the same as stated above.

There can be issues where the Officer or APD doesn't submit the parking citations to the Parking Division timely and it causes the recipient to incur additional fees. If this occurs, Parking will enter the citations as of the date they receive the citation and the escalation clock will start from that date. If the recipient takes the citation to the Parking Division to pay prior to the Parking Division receiving it from APD, then the Parking clerk is supposed to enter the citation with the date the recipient presents the citation for payment which will reset the escalation fee date.

OIG determined that an existing policy exception for untimely submitted citations had not been processed according to the policy by a newly hired employee. The Parking Department Director resolved this matter after validating dates on the citation. The allegation to the complaint was founded, however, the Parking Department Director resolved the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant after the complaint was made but prior to the completion of the investigation and the complaint is being closed.