

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONCERNING AN  
INVESTIGATION INTO MISCONDUCT  
VIOLATIONS BY AN EMPLOYEE OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF  
CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS

2011-0571 (S)

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INVESTIGATIVE SYNOPSIS

The District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General (OIG) recently completed an investigation which revealed that a District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) employee improperly used a Maryland (MD) disability placard to obtain free parking in the vicinity of his District of Columbia work place. The investigation determined that the DCRA employee continued the improper use of the MD Disability Placard even after being interviewed by OIG investigators regarding his conduct.

During the investigation, OIG investigators conducted surveillances of the DCRA employee and his vehicles<sup>1</sup>, reviewed records obtained from the MD Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) regarding the MD registration tags assigned to the DCRA employee's vehicle, as well as the MD disability placard. OIG investigators also received information from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) Park Mobile Program and interviewed the DCRA employee.

The investigation revealed that the MD disability placard had been issued by MVA to an acquaintance of the DCRA employee. Between July 2011 and September 2012, OIG investigators conducted 22 surveillances during which the DCRA employee's vehicle<sup>2</sup> was observed parked in the vicinity of 1101 4<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., at metered parking spaces, with the MD disability placard hanging from the rearview mirror. On four of those occasions, OIG investigators observed the DCRA employee exiting or entering the vehicle alone. On each of the 22 occasions, OIG investigators observed both the parking meter and the dashboard of the DCRA employee's vehicle and saw that the DCRA employee had made no payment for the use of the metered space.

In his OIG interview on April 5, 2012, the DCRA employee admitted that he obtained a MD disability placard belonging to an acquaintance, to obtain free parking.<sup>3</sup> The DCRA employee admitted that he used the MD disability placard in the manner described, nearly every work day since he obtained it in the summer of 2011, so that he did not have to move his personal vehicle, pay

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<sup>1</sup> The DCRA employee owned a vehicle which bore a designated MD registration tag until April 5, 2012. On April 5, 2012, the DCRA employee surrendered that designated MD registration tag and obtained a substitute MD registration tag, which he placed on the same vehicle. Subsequently, the DCRA employee had the substitute MD registration tag on another vehicle. OIG investigators first observed the second vehicle, with the substitute MD registration tag, on June 26, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to April 5, 2012, the DCRA employee's vehicle had a designated MD tag; after April 5, 2012, the DCRA employee's vehicle had a substitute MD tag.

<sup>3</sup> Title 27 DCMR § 2704.4 permits persons with disabilities to park without cost for double the posted time period in parking zones that are time restricted, provided that the person with the disability is present in the motor vehicle.. *Id.* § 2704.4(b).

every couple of hours, or pay approximately \$12 per day to park in a garage. He also acknowledged that his use of the MD disability placard was improper because the person to whom the MD disability placard had been issued was not in the vehicle. According to the DCRA employee, he discontinued use of the disability placard approximately 2-3 weeks before his interview, because he read a newspaper article that stated that the rules for disability placards had changed.

OIG investigators, however, observed the DCRA employee's vehicle parked using the MD disability placard, without evidence of payment for use of the metered spaces, on nine occasions subsequent to April 5, 2012, (May 22, 2012, May 24, 2012, June 13, 2012, June 14, 2012, June 26, 2012, July 2, 2012, August 19, 2012, August 21, 2012, and September 10, 2012). On May 24, 2012, OIG investigators observed the DCRA employee's vehicle at approximately 12:15 p.m., and again at approximately 4:30 p.m., parked on Makemi Place, S.W., Washington, D.C. at an expired parking meter. The MD disability placard was displayed on the rearview mirror and no parking validation coupon was displayed on the dashboard. OIG investigators observed the DCRA employee enter the vehicle at approximately 4:56 p.m. and drive off alone.<sup>4</sup> The OIG investigation also revealed that on April 5, 2012, the DCRA employee surrendered to MVA the MD tag that was observed initially during this investigation and obtained a substitute MD tag, for his vehicle.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The OIG investigation revealed that the DCRA employee improperly obtained free parking using a MD disability placard issued to someone else on at least 22 occasions between July 2011 and September 2012. Although the DCRA employee advised OIG investigators that he discontinued improper use of the MD disability placard 2-3 weeks prior to his April 5, 2012, interview, the investigation determined that the DCRA employee continued his improper conduct even after his OIG interview. Accordingly, this investigation has **SUBSTANTIATED** that the DCRA employee violated DPM § 1803.1(a)(6) (Affecting adversely the confidence of the public in the integrity of government).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of this investigation, the OIG recommends that DCRA:

- Address the DCRA employee's conduct with appropriate administrative action;
- Ensure that all DCRA employees are trained appropriately regarding the District's standards of conduct.

*Dated: November 20, 2012*

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<sup>4</sup> OIG investigators confirmed with the DDOT Park Mobile Program, that the MD tag assigned to the DCRA employee's vehicle did not obtain parking payment credit at any District metered parking on May 22, 2012, May 24, 2012, June 13, 2012, June 14, 2012, June 26, 2012, or July 2, 2012.