



Highlights:

Why We Did This Investigation

In May 2017, our office received information alleging that a city employee in the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department was using city fuel for his personal benefit. As a result, we conducted an investigation as part of our responsibility under the Atlanta City Charter.

Distribution

- Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, Mayor of Atlanta
- President Felicia A. Moore and Members, Atlanta City Council
- Dan Gordon, Chief Operating Officer
- Jeremy Berry, City Attorney
- Joel Baker, Fire Chief
- Angela Addison, Interim Commissioner of Department of Human Resources

Investigation Report:

Atlanta Fire Rescue Department: Use of City Resources for Personal Benefit

The purpose of this report is to inform you of the results of a recent investigation conducted by the City Auditor's Office Investigations Unit.

Objective

Our objective was to determine if city employee, Brandon Francois, working in the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department (AFRD) used city of Atlanta fuel for his personal benefit.

Background

In May 2017, we received an allegation that Brandon Francois, fire equipment service technician in the AFRD, filled his personal vehicle with city fuel from a city gas can.

During the investigation, we included Ronald Hood, also a city employee with the AFRD, as a subject based on evidence that he participated in similar activities as Francois.

What We Found

We found evidence indicating that both Francois and Hood used city fuel for their personal benefit. The actions of Francois and Hood appear to constitute violations of the following criteria:

- City Charter Section 5-401(b) - Conflicts of interest provisions applicable to city officials and employees
- City Code Section 114-528(b)(11) - Cause for action

In an interview with us, Francois admitted to taking home one five-gallon city gas can filled with city fuel in his personal vehicle on 10 separate occasions between June and October 2016 and emptying the fuel into his personal vehicle up to 10 times. Francois also admitted to filling one five-gallon city gas can with city fuel on two occasions between May and June 2016 for Ronald Hood at his request. Francois observed Hood place the gas can in his personal vehicle and leave the facility on both occasions. However, due to a lack of fuel usage records maintained by the department, employee access to city fuel, and multiple gas cans maintained onsite at the public safety annex, the amount of fuel taken may have been much more.

Fire Station 5 maintains both unleaded and diesel fuel pumps. Both pumps are located in the rear directly outside of the fire station doors. The fire station is protected by a chain link fence; however, the fence is only locked between the approximate hours of 8:00 pm and 6:30 am. The unleaded fuel pump is restricted by a combination padlock; however, the diesel fuel pump is not locked to restrict access (see photos). The



department does not maintain fuel usage records.

As a fire equipment service technician since July 2015, Francois is responsible for repairing, inspecting, and issuing equipment to fire stations, which includes fueling equipment. Francois knew the combination code for the padlock on the unleaded gas pump located at Fire Station 5. He visited the station to fill gas cans and maintained them in his city-issued vehicle or in the public safety annex where he is stationed. Multiple gas cans filled with fuel are stored at the public safety annex.

Francois admitted to putting one five-gallon city gas can that he obtained from the public safety annex in his personal vehicle on 10 occasions and driving to his final service call for the day on his way home. He stopped by one of several fire stations along his route home and filled the fire station's gas cans or equipment, such as lawn mowers, with as few as 1.25 gallons of the gas he had with him. He took the remaining fuel home and emptied it into his personal vehicle.

These acts appear to constitute violations of the following criteria:

- City charter on conflicts of interest states that no elected official, officer, or employee shall use property of the city for his or her personal benefit or profit except in accordance with policies and procedures of the city. City Charter Section 5-401(b) - Conflicts of interest provisions applicable to city officials and employees
- City code on cause for action states that abuse or theft of property constitute cause for which disciplinary action may be imposed. City Code Section 114-528(b)(11) - Cause for action

In an interview with us, Hood admitted to taking home one five-gallon city gas can filled with city fuel on 13 separate occasions since approximately 2009 during his tenure at the public safety annex and emptying the fuel into his personal equipment and gas can up to 13 times. However, due to a lack of fuel usage records maintained by the department, employee access to city fuel, and multiple gas cans maintained onsite at the public safety annex, the amount of fuel taken may have been much more.

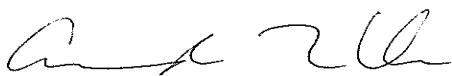
Hood has worked as a storekeeper since October 2004. He is responsible for stocking all city fire stations excluding the airport, with supplies and appliances such as paper towels, cleaning supplies, ovens, and washers and dryers. Hood receives the inventory at his warehouse located at the public safety annex, delivers it to the fire stations, and manually maintains inventory for reorders. Hood is stationed at the public safety annex with AFR fire equipment service personnel, where fire station equipment is serviced and maintained. Working at the annex, Hood has access to gas cans and equipment maintained by the fire equipment service personnel.

In an interview with us Hood admitted to asking Francois to fill one five-gallon city gas can for him on one occasion in the summer of 2016. Hood obtained the gas can filled with fuel from Francois, placed it in his personal vehicle, took it home, and emptied the fuel from the gas can into his personal lawn mower and gas can. Hood also admitted to borrowing city equipment, including a chainsaw, leaf blower, and weed eater from the public safety annex on at least 12 occasions since approximately 2009 during his tenure at the annex. Hood stated that he borrowed the equipment with permission from the department. On each occasion, Hood also took a five-gallon city gas can filled with fuel home from the annex to fill city equipment as needed. However, Hood admitted to emptying the fuel in his personal equipment and gas can.

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We appreciate the cooperation and assistance we received from personnel in the AFRD during this investigation.



Amanda Noble, City Auditor