

**Department of Public Works**

**Response**

**Case # 24-0784-C**

## CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT, Mayor



## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Khalil Zaied, Acting Director  
Abel Wolman Municipal Building, 6th Floor.  
200 N. Holliday Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

July 16, 2024

Isabel Mercedes Cumming  
Office of the Inspector General  
City Hall, Room 635  
100 North Holliday Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

### **RE: DPW Response to OIG Emergency Follow-up for Case #24-0784-C Referral, dated 7/10/2024**

Dear Inspector General Cumming:

This letter is in response to the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) Emergency Follow-up related to the referral for case 24-0784-C and published on July 10, 2024. The Emergency Follow-up references a site visit by the OIG on July 10, 2024, that identified a lack of ice and inoperable water fountains, a lack of air conditioning and proper temperate control, and potential OSHA and MOU issues related to the Department of Public Works ("DPW") Cherry Hill yard at 701 Reedbird Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21225.

More specifically, during your site visit at 6:00 a.m. on July 10, 2024, you documented no evidence of ice or water bottles that were delivered to early shift employees. At the time of your visit the ice machine was not in working condition; however, the repair parts were on site and later that same day the machine was repaired and restored to working condition. Additionally, on the same day, supervisors made three deliveries of ice to the facility, which was standard practice for when the ice machine was down. Water bottles were placed out for crews arriving before 6:00 am. Please note, several cases of bottled water and Gatorade are always located onsite and secured in a locked area. Supervisors for the facility restock the bins that are accessible to the employees throughout the day, especially, in the early morning. This is standard practice to ensure that supplies are monitored and not used for unintended purposes. As a backup measure, DPW also procured five (5) additional freezers and 100 pounds of ice, that were distributed at each of the solid waste yards to ensure a continuous supply of ice during the summer months.

The OIG site visit also noted inoperable water fountains inside the administrative building at the facility. It should be noted that the water fountains are in working order; however, the covers were placed over the fountains in March 2020 at the early start of the pandemic and have remained in place. Nevertheless, there are working water dispensers inside the employee breakroom that are accessible to all staff working at the facility.

You also noted the temporary AC units in both the locker room and the administrative building. DPW recognizes that both locations are warm utilizing the portable AC units, especially during hotter weather days. Administrative staff working at the facility have since been relocated or allowed to telework until permanent repairs are made to the HVAC system. A vendor was onsite on July 11, 2024, and DPW continues to work with its partner agency, Department of General Services (DGS), to ensure that repairs to the HVAC system are prioritized. Lastly, DPW staff could not identify the sink you noted producing hot water from a cold faucet as all sinks have both cold and hot water coming from separate faucet handles.

DPW acknowledges and takes full responsibility for the health and safety of our dedicated staff. We recognize the challenging conditions our employees face while performing their essential duties, and we are committed to taking every possible measure to protect them. Each year, DPW takes proactive steps, particularly in the Bureau of Solid Waste, to prepare for summer temperatures. Our efforts include:

1. **Equipment:** We supply our employees with necessary protective gear, including lightweight, breathable clothing. For the Bureau of Solid Waste, an order was placed on June 26, 2024, for 3,700 high-vis moisture wear T-shirts which are expected to arrive in the coming days. The clothing will be distributed to all employees within the Bureau.
2. **Education and Training:** We provide comprehensive training to educate employees and their supervisors about the risks of heat-related illnesses and the importance of taking preventive measures, per the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.
3. **Resources to Keep Cool:** We ensure all work sites are equipped with ample supplies of water, shaded rest areas, and cooling stations.

Ultimately, the Reedbird Sanitation Yard requires facility upgrades. Under Mayor Brandon M. Scott's leadership, Baltimore City has made the necessary investments to improve DPW facilities that went neglected for decades. Over the next three years in the Capital Improvement Plan (2025-2027), the City has allocated \$3.75 million for solid waste facility health and safety improvements, and an additional \$1.42 million in ARPA funding was awarded for solid waste capital/facility improvements. Separately, \$8.1 million is budgeted for the Reedbird Sanitation Yard improvements. DPW and its contractor are currently in the design phase for these improvements. During construction, the agency plans to address and complete repairs to the air conditioning system, floors, lockers, and other necessary updates to ensure a better working environment for our employees. The current timeline for design and construction is three years.

Thank you for your continued partnership and attention to this matter. DPW is committed to providing safe and healthy working conditions for all its employees. Please feel free to contact Craig Jeter, Bureau Head of Solid Waste, at [Craig.Jeter@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Craig.Jeter@baltimorecity.gov), if you need further information.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Luna  
Deputy Director

Cc: Faith P. Leach, Chief Administrative Officer  
Simone C. Johnson, Deputy City Administrator  
Khalil Zaied, Acting Director  
LaToya Curtis, Chief of Staff  
Craig Jeter, Bureau Head for Solid Waste