



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CITY OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES DRAMATIC DECREASE IN ABSENTEEISM IN  
DEPARTMENT OF STREETS AND SANITATION**

*Efforts from Leadership Result in Cost Savings, More Efficient Services*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Streets and Sanitation Commissioner Thomas Byrne announced today that the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) has seen a more than 15 percent decrease in absenteeism, as a result of some new measures being taken by the department to curb this issue.

"I've asked City workers to be our partners in providing efficient service for taxpayers, and this is a prime example of City government and the City's workforce improving the way things happen in Chicago," said Mayor Emanuel. "The reductions in absenteeism allow us to reduce costs and ensure that the City's workers can compete and provide the best possible service for the residents."

When the Mayor took office, he was confronted with a problem of chronic absenteeism in DSS, including three very specific and serious issues:

- Repetitive or chronic tardiness
- Chronic use of "absent—no pay" and "sick—no pay" time
- Monday/Friday pattern absence abuse

The Mayor and Commissioner Byrne met with DSS supervisors and managers to discuss the critical role high attendance plays in providing basic services to taxpayers and in City



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workers' ability to compete with private sector workers. He called upon them to work with the commissioner and the Mayor to reduce absenteeism dramatically.

It worked.

For the first four months of 2012, absenteeism is down 16.3 percent year over year for motor truck drivers, and 13.15 percent year over year for laborers. Additionally there has been a 40 percent reduction in disciplinary cases related to absenteeism – from 253 to 152. Disciplinary action is taken in cases that fall into the aforementioned categories above. DSS has also met with the Department of Law, Labor Relations to discuss ways to improve and streamline the disciplinary process, resulting in cases being handled more effectively.

“Laborers’ Local 1001 is pleased to work together with Mayor Emanuel, the Department of Streets and Sanitation and our membership to be a part of the solution to this problem,” said Lou Phillips, the business manager for Laborers’ Local 1001. “In this environment, it is important that laborers stay competitive and the best way to do that is to show up to the job every day and give our best effort.”

In the first four months of 2011, motor truck drivers called in 15.3 times per day, while laborers averaged 30.4 calls. In 2012, those figures dropped to 12.8 and 26.4 respectively. This decrease in absenteeism has resulted in laborers working an additional 242 days this year, totaling 1,936 additional hours. Motor truck drivers have worked 1,304 additional hours on 163 additional days. These additional hours mean the City is on pace to achieve approximately 6,000 additional laborer hours and about 4,000 additional motor truck driver hours, totaling roughly five full worker-years.

A robust workforce is even more important as the City begins to roll out a grid garbage collection system. To put it into context, one motor truck driver and one laborer can pick up roughly 2,780 tons of garbage in a year. A full crew daily is essential to ensuring garbage collection is completed on time and as efficiently as possible.

To ensure that the attendance stays consistent and high, DSS is educating employees about work rules, enforcing work rules, and monitoring for trends and patterns. Further, since last fall, information on absenteeism is posted online as part of the City of Chicago data



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collection. Additionally, Commissioner Byrne is making personal phone calls to employees who are approaching the maximum paid sick time allowed to inform them of their status.

“We have been working hard with our supervisors and union leadership to educate our staff about work rules and ensure these rules have been fairly and consistently enforced,” said Commissioner Thomas G. Byrne, Department of Streets and Sanitation. “Under the leadership of Mayor Emanuel, we will continue develop new strategies that support a high quality workforce that delivers the best possible services to Chicagoans.”

Beginning soon, the City of Chicago will be expanding the number of departments for which it posts absenteeism data, beginning with the Department of Water Management and the Chicago Department of Transportation.

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