

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
CITY OF BALTIMORE



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

Investigative
Report Synopsis

OIG Case # 25-0004-I

Issued: August 5, 2025



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



August 5, 2025

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The mission of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is to promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government, as well as to investigate complaints of fraud, financial waste, and abuse.

The OIG conducted follow-up visits to the Department of Public Works' (DPW) Eastern Sanitation Yard (Bowley's Lane) and Western Sanitation Yard (Cherry Hill).¹ The OIG conducted the site visits beginning at approximately 6 a.m. on June 24, 2025, during the Code Red Extreme Heat Alert issued by the Health Commissioner for June 22 through June 26, 2025.² The OIG also conducted another visit to Bowley's Lane on July 16, 2025. The OIG documented observations at both sites in the following report, noting marked improvements since last summer.

Background

The OIG conducted numerous site visits during the summer months of 2024 to DPW workplaces, including Bowley's Lane and Cherry Hill. The OIG substantiated a complaint received in June 2024 and found a lack of water and ice at Cherry Hill. On June 20, 2024, the OIG sent a [referral](#) to DPW management. DPW [responded](#) on June 26, 2024.

After DPW's referral response, the OIG received additional complaints that prompted the OIG to visit Cherry Hill on July 10, 2024. That day, temperatures reached 95°F. When the OIG arrived, there was no evidence that ice or water bottles were delivered to the yard and made available to the early shift employees. Employees reported the day prior that water bottles were delivered to the yard in a trash can full of ice, but nothing that day. The ice inside the trash can was melted, and the water bottles were warm at 6:00 a.m. The air-conditioning in the main trailer that DPW had previously stated would be a cooling station had stopped working a few weeks before, and the thermostats read 83°F and 85°F before 7:00 a.m. An [emergency report](#) was issued a couple of hours later.

The OIG went on to release additional reports related to conditions at other DPW sites, an overall workplace culture report, and a report regarding the heat-related death of DPW Laborer Ronald Silver II.

Cherry Hill – June 24, 2025

The OIG learned that Cherry Hill's operations have been relocated to 2900 Nieman Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21215, because of the Cherry Hill Yard renovations (Figures 1&2). The OIG learned that a shuttle was available to transport employees to Nieman Avenue site (Figure 3). The shuttle, driven by a

¹ Bowley's Lane is located at 6101 Bowley's Lane, Baltimore, MD 21206. Cherry Hill is located at 700 Reedbird Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21225.

² <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2025-06-20-interim-health-commissioner-declares-first-code-red-extreme-heat>.

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

DPW employee, arrived at Cherry Hill at about 6:02 a.m. and picked up several employees en route to Nieman Ave.³

Figures 1&2: Cherry Hill Yard closed

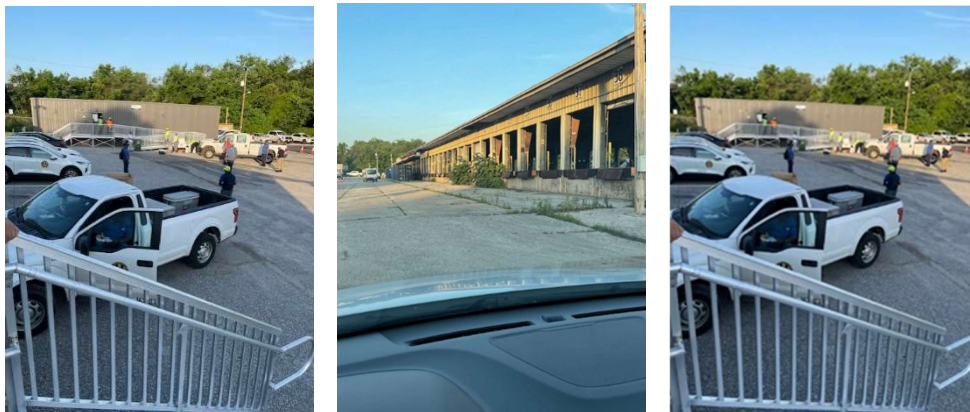


Figure 3: Shuttle to transport employees



Upon arriving at Nieman Ave, the OIG observed an open lot with multiple new trailers, containers, City vehicles, and DPW trash vehicles (Figures 4-10).

Figures 4-10: Open lot area with new trailers, containers, and City vehicles



³ The OIG traveled in its own City vehicle and traveled the same route to Nieman Ave as the shuttle.

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

There were two large coolers filled with ice and a few water bottles (Figures 11&12). When asked by the OIG, many employees said they receive water and ice daily, and there is a functioning ice machine. The employees stated that there is no limit on the number of water bottles they can take.

Figures 11&12: Large coolers filled with ice and water bottles



The OIG asked a handful of supervisors about the distribution of Gatorade packs. Several confirmed that supervisors distribute the Gatorade packs to the employees, and there is no limit on how many employees could receive them. When asked by the OIG to see the Gatorade packs, one supervisor asked if their word was not good enough and why the OIG needed to see them. Another Solid Waste Supervisor volunteered to show the OIG the Gatorade packs and retrieved a sandwich bag filled with Gatorade packs from a City vehicle. The OIG was able to see several packs of Gatorade in four flavors (Figures 13-17).

Figures 13-17: Gatorade packs in different flavors



Most employees appeared to be wearing yellow or orange high-visibility uniforms. Some employees confirmed they had proper uniforms and boots to complete their jobs. Employees further stated that overall conditions had improved in the workplace. A supervisor confirmed that coolers are distributed to employees daily, and a working ice machine is on site.

The OIG observed several employees with grey coolers in their hands as they approached their trucks. The supervisor said extra coolers are stored in the blue container on site. An unlocked blue container that was accessible to employees had extra coolers, and office supplies (Figures 18-20).

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

Figures 18-20: Blue container with coolers



Most of the trucks were white, newer models and there were only a few green, older models. Further, the trucks had an area for a cooler to be strapped to the truck's passenger side (Figures 21&22).

Figures 21&22: Newer trucks with space for cooler on the passenger side



A trailer was used as the locker room. It was new, clean, and cool with air conditioning. There were designated shower areas, seating, and tables for employees (Figures 23-26). Several men were seated in the men's locker room.

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

Figures 23-26: Locker room area with showers and seating



Another trailer contained an office area. The offices were clean and cool with air conditioning. The OIG observed a water cooler with additional water cooler refills, a refrigerator, and several fire extinguishers that had been serviced within the last year (Figures 27&28).

Figures 27&28: Office areas



One employee mentioned bushes in some of the alleys along the routes that cause safety concerns while backing. He said there are many alleys like this; however, the “Spaulding/ Park Heights Route” is an

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

area of concern. The employee said the driver must fold in their mirrors and back blindly for the truck to fit in the alley.

While at the yard, another employee mentioned that the packer and loader on a truck were malfunctioning. This concern was mentioned to a DPW Superintendent so that the issue could be addressed.

Bowley's Lane – June 24, 2025 & July 16, 2025

The OIG arrived at Bowley's Lane at approximately 6 a.m. and viewed a cooler full of ice being restocked with water bottles (Figures 29&30). A storage room contained numerous cases of water. Employees confirmed they were being provided with sufficient amounts of water bottles.

Figures 29&30: Water cooler and supply of water bottles



The OIG learned that supervisors provide Gatorade packs that employees can mix into their water (Figure 30). Heat stroke information was also posted in the workplace for employees to view (Figure 31).

Figure 30: Gatorade packs



Figure 31: Heat stroke informational poster



REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

The OIG learned that supervisors were instructed to perform wellness stops and confirm that employees were required to take breaks once the temperature reached 90 degrees every two hours. According to a DPW Superintendent, supervisors are required to meet their employees at designated locations to confirm that breaks occur.

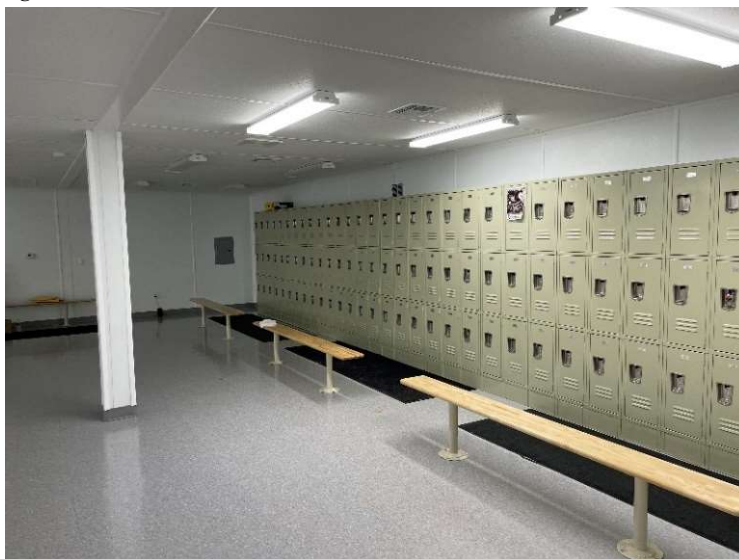
The OIG observed the old locker room area and the progress of currently underway renovations (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Renovations beginning in old locker room area



While the old locker room area is being renovated, employees can use new trailers that serve as locker rooms. The locker rooms are spacious and contain showers and bathrooms. The OIG confirmed the bathrooms were stocked with toilet paper (Figures 33-36), which was absent during the July 2024 site visit. The locker rooms also had air conditioning, which had a significant, cooling effect.

Figures 33&34: Locker room area in new trailers



REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

Figures 35&36: Bathrooms with toilet paper



On another follow-up visit on July 16, 2025, the OIG confirmed that the ice machines were working, new refrigerators had been installed, and DPW had purchased large freezers for additional ice supplies (Figures 37-41). The OIG also observed the coolers that are provided to workers and spoke with an employee who had received a DPW water bottle.

Figures 37-41: Freezer, refrigerators, cooler, and working ice machines



REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

During the site visit, most employees were observed wearing high-visibility shirts as part of their uniform. Additionally, some employees had DPW-issued arm sleeves and gloves.

Numerous workers stated that workplace conditions have been improving, but they are waiting for an increase in their salaries.

Findings

The OIG noted these observations early on June 24, 2025, as DPW prepared for a day when the heat index reached above 100°F, and again on July 16, 2025. DPW had water and Gatorade packs available for employees and has made accommodations with new trailers so that employees can access air-conditioned locker rooms with showers. While larger issues outlined in the OIG's workplace environment report will also be followed up on over time, this report notes the substantial difference and visible progress made in DPW's preparation for extreme heat conditions.

Sincerely,

Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

CC: Hon. Brandon M. Scott, Mayor of Baltimore City
Hon. Zeke Cohen, Baltimore City Council President
Hon. Bill Henry, Baltimore City Comptroller
Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council
Hon. Ebony Thompson, Baltimore City Solicitor

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

HOTLINE: 443-984-3476/800-417-0430 EMAIL: OIG@BALTIMORECITY.GOV WEBSITE: OIG.BALTIMORECITY.GOV

This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official