

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

CITY OF BALTIMORE



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

Investigative Report Synopsis

OIG Case # 27-0001-I

Issued: July 9, 2026



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



July 9, 2026

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The mission of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is to independently promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government, as well as to independently investigate complaints of fraud, financial waste, and abuse. The following synopsis is a condensed version of the full report provided to City management officials and does not contain all investigative information.

The OIG received a complaint alleging poor working conditions at the Department of Public Works' (DPW) Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plant (Patapsco Plant) located at 3501 Asiatic Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21226. The complainant alleged that DPW employees work in unsafe work conditions and were currently working in extreme heat with temperatures at 86° Fahrenheit (F).

Working Conditions

On July 1, 2026, the OIG visited various sections of the Patapsco Plant and spoke to DPW employees onsite. The OIG visited a building that employees referred to as the Return 2 building at the Patapsco Plant. At a door entrance that employees used, the OIG observed cracked and broken concrete flooring (Figures 1 and 2).

Figures 1 and 2: Flooring at doorway



The air-conditioning in the main hallways appeared to work and was cooling the area, but employees reported that it typically does not cool the building. During the site visit, the OIG observed maintenance being performed on the building's air-conditioning. The building's main air-conditioning system does not extend to the men's locker room and other areas. The temperature inside the men's locker room was 89.6°F (Figure 3). The air-conditioner affixed to the wall and secured with seemingly spray foam was

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

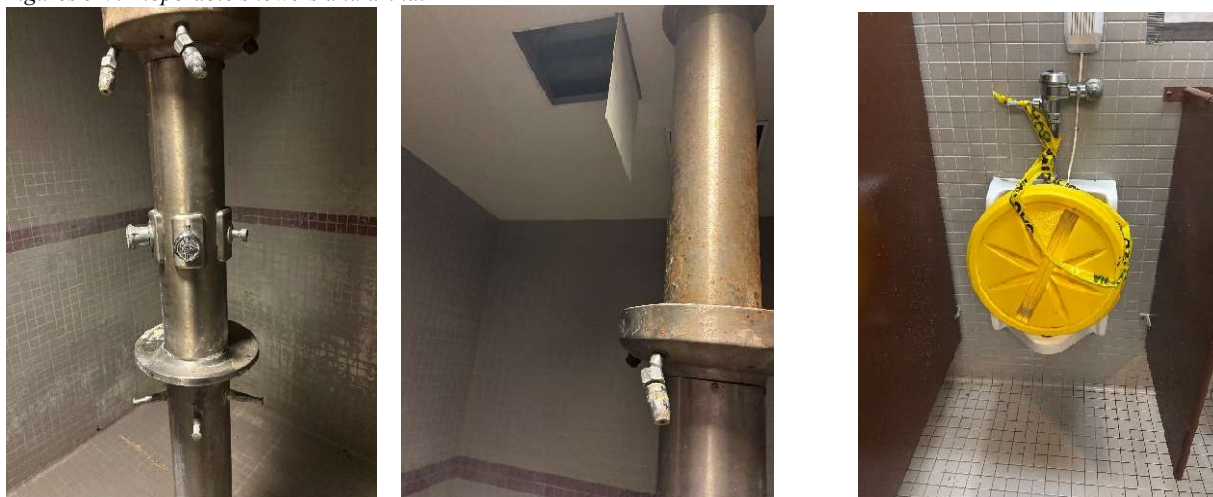
not working despite being set at 60°F (Figure 4). A water cooler was also located in a hallway with water in it.

Figures 3 and 4: Temperature and air-conditioner in men's locker room area



Employees reported that the showers were not functioning and that there was a broken urinal in the locker room. Employees stated they are unable to wash contaminants off if they get “sludge” or chemicals on them due to the showers not functioning. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “sludge” means any solid, semi-solid, or liquid waste generated from a municipal, commercial, or industrial wastewater treatment plant, water supply treatment plant, or air pollution control facility exclusive of the treated effluent from a wastewater treatment plant.¹

Figures 5-7: Inoperable showers and urinal



¹ <https://archive.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/web/pdf/i-sludge.pdf>

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

An employee on-site explained that the doors are propped open because there is poor ventilation for the chemicals being used. The employee described being able to see a chemical haze upon arrival in the building (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Door propped open due to chemical smell



According to an employee, chemicals are used to bind the sludge together inside the building. The chemical room is in the basement of the building. The OIG observed large tanks of the chemicals, which the employee explained contain [ferric chloride](#) and polymer (Figure 9). The OIG observed a ventilation fan that was not working, and the employee reported it has been broken for several years (Figure 10). This may violate Occupational Safety and Health regulations regarding ventilation.² The employee stated ferric chloride residue stayed on the walls behind the tanks.

Figure 9: Chemical Tanks with residue on wall



Figure 10: Ventilation fan not functioning



² <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.57>

Inside the area, the OIG could smell the chemicals and feel the hot humidity, which appeared to contribute to poor air quality. An employee stated that several employees have reported feeling sick and fatigued with flu-like symptoms. The OIG learned there is an illness associated with the chemicals called polymer fume fever.³

In the employee breakroom, a newer stove was observed, but the kitchen sink, microwave and prep area, were rusting and dirty (Figure 11). The vents in the employee breakroom had an unknown black particulate matter on them (Figures 12&13).

Figure 11: Kitchen sink and microwave area



Figures 12&13: Unknown black particulate matter on vents



³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25706449/>

The OIG visited the Pump and Blower building at the Patapsco Plant. The OIG observed a pump that was leaking and pooling on the floor (Figure 14 & Exhibit 1).⁴ One employee stated it was leaking, while another employee claimed the pump was supposed to be “dripping” and someone would come to clean it up (Figure 14). The pump area can be visible from the men’s locker room.

Figure 14: Leaking pump



The chemical lab room had an air conditioner affixed to the wall which worked and cooled the room. However, it was reported that there was no working water system in the room, causing the eyewash station to be inoperable and making it difficult to clean the room (Figures 15-17).

Figures 15-16: Chemical lab room



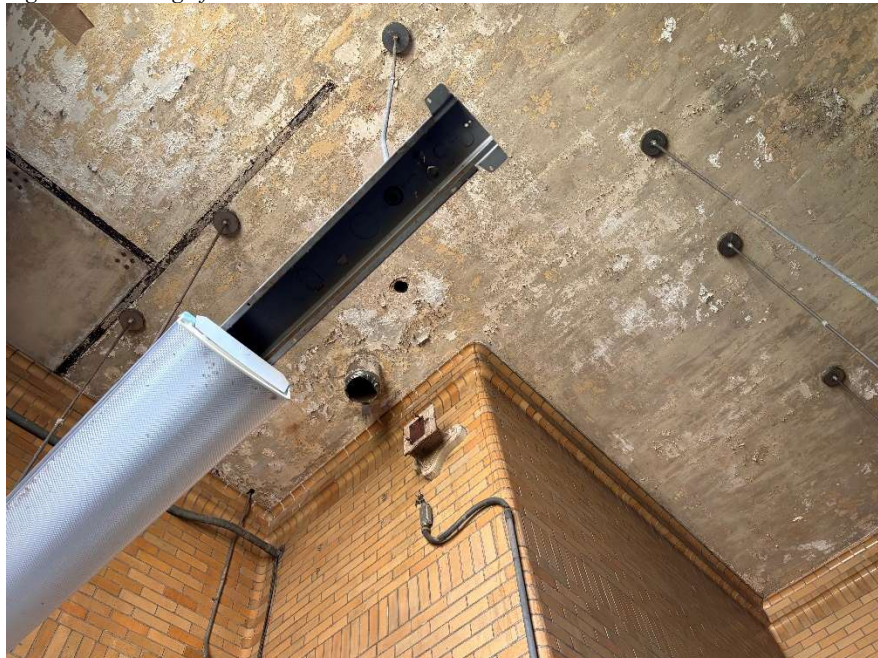
⁴ Exhibit 1 is a video file that will be sent along with this report.

Figure 17: Eyewash station



The ceiling in the room appeared in poor condition and was flaking (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Ceiling of chemical lab 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

The bathroom in the building also appeared dirty, and there was paint flaking from the ceiling.

Figures 19&20: Bathroom area and ceiling



An employee showed the weir tanks outside the building and stated they sometimes overflow and spill into the ground, which is located near the water shoreline.

Findings/Recommendations

The OIG's observations during the July 1st site visit to the Patapsco Plant raise concerns about DPW's compliance with Occupational Safety and Health regulations, including the Maryland Heat Stress Illness Prevention Standard,⁵ ventilation standards, and the Memorandums of Understanding with City labor unions.

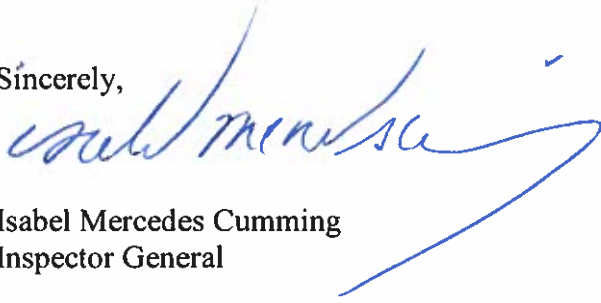
With the Code Red Extreme Heat Alert in effect through July 4, 2026, and the National Weather Service's forecast of a [104°F temperature for July 2nd](#), the OIG recommended immediate action to be taken to explore alternatives and long-term solutions for reoccurring temperature concerns throughout the summer months.

The City removed the OIG's direct access to records, files, and communications on February 6, 2026. The OIG currently has 13 outstanding subpoenas for correspondence, 9 of which were provided to BCIT and the Law Department in March 2026. The OIG is unable to directly access and review correspondence in a timely manner related to investigations, including this serious safety matter.

⁵ The Maryland Heat Stress Standards apply when employees are exposed to a heat index that equals or exceeds 80°F: [Heat Stress - Maryland Occupational Safety and Health \(MOSH\)](#)

The OIG wishes to thank DPW for their prompt response and action to the safety concerns.

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

Exhibits

1. Video of leaking pump

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