

## **Arraignment Set for Employee Accused of Insurance Fraud**

- Focus on safety, claims handling, fraud credited in reducing MTA's Workers' Comp costs

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Jan. 7, 2004) A Metro Bus operator accused of faking an injury to collect \$3,000 in Workers' Compensation will be arraigned in Superior Court, Feb. 9, on 16 counts of insurance fraud.

Lolita A. Hicks Dolliole-Crowder, 50, of Palmdale, a 23-year MTA employee assigned to East Valley Division 15, was arrested Dec. 30. If convicted on all 16 fraud counts, she could face up to five years in prison.

The operator, who previously had filed 15 Workers' Comp claims, said she was injured, Dec. 3, during an assault by a bus passenger.

Investigators from MTA's Special Investigations Unit reviewed an on-board videotape of the incident and found that, although there had been an argument between the operator and the passenger, there was no evidence of an assault.

### **Reducing Workers' Comp costs**

The employee's arrest marks the first such action since MTA began a campaign to reduce Workers' Comp costs in FY 2002. At that time, the agency was spending \$64.4 million annually on injury claims – nearly 10 percent of the hourly cost of operating a Metro bus.

MTA's Workers' Comp costs were six times more per employee than for Washington D.C.'s transit system and 10 times higher than those for New York City's transit agency.

In FY 2003, MTA's Worker's Comp costs fell to \$54.3 million, a 16 percent reduction from the previous fiscal year, according to Chief Financial Officer Dick Brumbaugh.

### **'Clearly making progress'**

"We're clearly making progress," says Brumbaugh, pointing primarily to the success of the Safety's First program in reducing employee injuries, but also crediting the improved handling of injury claims and the effort to root out fraudulent claims.

"We're well aware that the huge majority of all injury claims are legitimate," says Bruce Cochran, the County Counsel assigned to the Special Investigations Unit. "Employees are entitled to medical care and disability payments, but we are actively pursuing those claims that are fraudulent."

Of all the factors associated with reducing Workers' Comp costs, however, Brumbaugh says, "We'll reap the most benefits by having a safe environment."

[Back to MTA Report](#)