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Employee Arrested, Charged with Insurance Fraud

- \$47,000 in fraudulent payments at issue

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 19, 2004) An MTA employee who has been off work on Workers' Compensation disability since January 2002 was arrested at her home in East Los Angeles, today, and charged with felony insurance fraud.

Gail Alcantar, 54, was booked into the Los Angeles County Jail where she was being held on \$10,000 bail. Arrested by agents of the State Department of Insurance, she is due to be arraigned, Friday, in Los Angeles Municipal Court.

Today's arrest was the second in less than two months of an MTA employee suspected of insurance fraud. Lolita A. Hicks Dolliole-Crowder, 50, of Palmdale was charged, Dec. 30, with 16 counts of insurance fraud. Her case is still pending.

Alcantar, who joined MTA in March 1984 and is assigned to North Los Angeles Division 3, filed a claim for an injury to her left foot in January 2002. Since then, according to MTA's Risk Management Special Investigations Unit, MTA has paid \$47,000 in Workers Comp benefits in response to her claim.

She had filed four previous claims for similar foot and leg injuries that totaled \$70,000, but has not been charged in connection with those claims.

Videotape of gardening

The investigation of Alcantar's most recent injury claim began in June 2002 when Special Investigations Unit agents videotaped her gardening at her home. For an hour, they watched as she lay sod and used a shovel to dig in her yard.

In a deposition taken in October 2002, she allegedly told MTA attorneys that her foot injuries prevented her from walking or standing for long periods, kneeling or applying heavy pressure with her feet.

MTA began a campaign to reduce Workers' Compensation 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.

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