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## Metro's Head Locksmith Charged with Grand Theft, Embezzlement

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(May 14, 2004) Metro's head locksmith was charged, May 8, with three felony counts of theft by embezzlement and commercial burglary for allegedly stealing agency-owned locks for use in a private business he was running on the side.

George Edmunds, 43, of Torrance, an employee since November 1993, has confessed to committing the felonies and remains in jail on a \$100,000 bond.

Sheriff's Detective Dan Regalado arrested Edmunds following an investigation by Senior Investigator George Coates of the MTA Inspector General's Office (OIG), who acted on a tip from a concerned Metro employee.

Investigators estimate the value of the locks, lock cores and keys at between \$800 and \$1,000. Edmunds allegedly accepted \$861 in payment from a private elementary school in Redondo Beach for installing the equipment.

The school was not aware the locks were Metro property, Regalado said.

### 'Unfortunate incident'

"This is an unfortunate incident that must not be seen as a reflection of how most Metro employees, and especially Mr. Edmunds' co-workers, conduct themselves," says CEO Roger Snoble. "This investigation demonstrates that when honest employees see something wrong, they contact the proper authorities who take action to correct it."

During his investigation, Coates also learned that in April 2003 Edmunds bought a marking machine with a Metro purchase card. Although he turned the machine over to his department, he allegedly kept a \$250 rebate card and used it to buy a \$150 DVD player.

Deputy Inspector General Mimi Strauss said Edmunds' activities continued until at least November 2003. Edmunds was arrested at 5 a.m., May 4, in the Regional Rebuild Center parking lot.

Citing cooperation between OIG and the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau during the three-month investigation, Strauss said it was "a very successful joint operation. The cooperation level was extremely high."

The law enforcement team later recovered the locks from 30 different locations at the private school. Of special concern was the fact that the master keys that opened locks at the school also would open locks at Metro facilities.

