



Barry L. Kluger
Inspector General

Office of the Inspector General
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Two Penn Plaza, 5th Floor
New York, New York 10121
212-878-0000

June 1, 2018

Darryl Irick
President
MTA Bus Company
Senior Vice President, NYC Transit
Department of Buses
2 Broadway, 30th Floor
New York, NY 10004

**Re: Cleaner Helper Unauthorized
Disposal of Passenger Property
MTA/OIG #2018-23**

Dear Mr. Irick:

The Office of the MTA Inspector General (OIG) has concluded its investigation into an allegation that MTA New York City Transit Department of Buses (DOB) Cleaner/Helper Paul Dhuman (Dhuman) took a passenger's lost property from an MTA bus and failed to properly report and account for the property. We substantiated the allegation. We recommend DOB impose discipline on Dhuman, up to and including termination. We further recommend that DOB takes action to ensure that employees at all of its depots are fully aware of the rules and procedures for handling lost property and addressing inquiries from customers.

BACKGROUND

Paul Dhuman was hired by DOB as a Cleaner/Helper on August 17, 2017, and is assigned to the Kingsbridge Depot. His regular working hours are 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Dhuman is currently a probationary employee.

INVESTIGATION

OIG learned that a female passenger left her purse containing a wallet, her identification and credit cards on bus BX (Bronx) 1 Limited. According to the passenger, on March 15, 2018, she disembarked at the bus's last stop and realized that her purse was missing. She immediately went to the Kingsbridge Depot to retrieve her purse, but none of the employees at the depot gave her information about how to report or retrieve lost property. The passenger was merely told to call the depot "in a few hours" but when she did, no one who answered the phone assisted her or directed her to the Lost Property Unit.

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The next day, March 16, 2018, the passenger received a telephone message at her job from a man who identified himself as "Paul." When she returned the call, Paul informed her that he found her driver's license on the street and that he was in Jamaica, Queens. The passenger realized that he could only have gotten her business telephone number from her business card, which had been inside her purse. When the passenger asked Paul how he got her number, he hung up. The passenger used Google to search for the caller's telephone number and found that the number belonged to Paul Dhuman. The passenger called the Kingsbridge Depot and asked for Dhuman, but was told he was not there at that time. She called the depot again in an attempt to retrieve her purse and was told that the buses are cleaned every night before they are put back in service.

On April 12, 2018, OIG investigators interviewed Dhuman who claimed that he found driver licenses and other identification documents on the dashboards of buses he cleaned. He was asked if he could have found the documents on a passenger seat, floor or even in a wallet or purse, but Dhuman insisted he found the items on the dashboard of a bus each time. However, after further questioning, Dhuman admitted to finding a female passenger's purse on the floor of a bus and removing her driver's license and business card from the wallet in the purse. Dhuman said he telephoned the passenger at her work number and left a message; the passenger returned his telephone call; and Dhuman told her that he found her driver's license. Dhuman said he told her that he worked 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. and claimed the passenger responded that it was too late for her to meet him and directed him to put her license in the mail to be returned to her, which he said he did.

Dhuman also admitted to finding another woman's identification and wallet on a bus in the weeks before the March 15, 2018 incident. He said that he contacted the owner of that wallet by calling the telephone number on a medical insurance card he found in the wallet. Dhuman said he told the insurance company employee that he had found a woman's wallet on the bus and wanted to return it. According to Dhuman, the insurance company employee gave him the woman's telephone number. Dhuman said he telephoned the woman and told her he found her wallet. He said the woman had difficulty communicating in English and told him that she would have her daughter call him. He said he received a telephone call from the daughter and asked her to come and pick up the wallet at 218th Street where he worked. According to Dhuman, the daughter told him to mail the item instead, which Dhuman said he did. Dhuman claimed he put the wallet in a plastic bag and put it in a mailbox. He said he did not remember the woman's name. Dhuman also admitted that in addition to the two women's belongings, he found two other driver's licenses, but did not contact the owners. He claimed he placed those items in a mailbox and said he could not remember the identities of individuals.

Dhuman gave a written statement to OIG staff in which he admitted finding the purse that was left on the bus on March 15, 2018. When asked what he did with the purse and wallet he found on that occasion, Dhuman said he threw them in the trash. He added that he did not try to use the credit cards and denied that he gave them to anyone else.

When asked why he didn't bring the property to lost and found, Dhuman initially said that he was never told what to do with property found on a bus, but after further questioning he admitted that was a lie, and that he had been given training on the procedures for what to do with passenger property found on a bus. Dhuman was asked if he had any lost property in his locker that he retrieved from buses. Dhuman said he found a drawstring bag on a bus that he used to carry water in when cleaning the buses. Dhuman denied that he had any wallets, purses, identification or any other property that he found on buses in his locker.

On April 16, 2018, OIG investigators, along with staff from NYC Transit Security and NYC Transit Special Investigations and Review examined Dhuman's locker at the Kingsbridge Depot and recovered the drawstring bag Dhuman said he found on a bus.

NYC Transit Policies

New York City Transit Rules and Regulations

NYC Transit Rule 34 – Lost Articles, subdivision (a) sets forth the rule for handling lost property found by NYC Transit employees: “All articles found by employees in cars, buses, stations, or elsewhere on System property, or turned over to employees by customers will be sent to the most convenient location equipped with Lost Property bags. Articles must be examined, information entered in the lost property log, and a receipt given to the employee or customer who turned them in.”

NYC Transit Rule 34(b) sets forth the procedure employees must follow for handling items found: “Articles must be properly tagged and the tag must not be removed from the article. Lost property will not be accepted without a tag. All articles will be placed in the lost property bag and the lost property bag will be locked. Articles will be delivered to the Lost Property Unit located at 34th/Penn Station (34th Street/ 8th Avenue, lower mezzanine) on a scheduled basis. Employees responsible for the custody of lost property must check all property receipts and articles when relieving each other. A chain of custody receipt form will be completed each time a relief is made.”

NYC Transit Rule 34(f) prohibits employees from contacting owners of lost property: “No employee other than those authorized by the proper authority, shall contact any owner of a lost article, either by letter or telephone, or in any other manner while said article is being held pending transmittal to the Lost Property Unit.”

FINDINGS

1. Dhuman failed to follow the procedures for handling property he found on a bus, in violation of NYC Transit Rule 34 (a) and (b).

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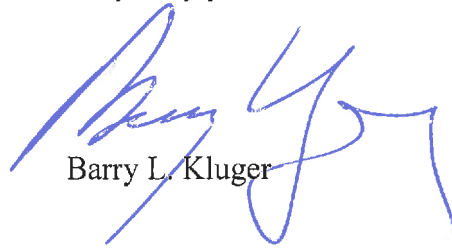
2. Dhuman directly contacted owners of lost property, in violation of NYC Transit Rule 34(f).
3. Department of Buses employees at Kingsbridge Depot failed to properly respond to a customer's inquiry regarding lost property and failed to direct her to the Lost Property Unit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that Department of Buses impose discipline on Dhuman, up to and including termination.
2. We further recommend that the Department of Buses takes action to ensure that employees at all of its depots are fully aware of the rules and procedures for handling lost property and addressing inquiries from customers.

As always, we appreciate your continued courtesy and cooperation. Should you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact me at (212) 879-0007 or Assistant Deputy Inspector General Monica J. Hickey-Martin (212) 878-0081.

Very truly yours,



Barry L. Kluger

cc: Andrew Byford, President, NYC Transit
Kim Moore-Ward, VP Labor Relations