



City's Parking Permits Problem Worse Than Thought

BY Staff Reporter of the Sun

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The number of government-issued parking permits provided to employees of city agencies is significantly higher than had been estimated by city officials, according to a citywide inventory.

Ordered by Mayor Bloomberg earlier this year as part of a citywide initiative to cut down on the sought-after permits by 20%, the inventory found that city agencies gave out about 142,000 parking permits last year.

"If you had asked me to guess when we started this analysis, I would have said there were between 70 and 80,000," Deputy Mayor Edward Skyler said. "Placards and permits are necessary for the government to do business, but it has gotten out of hand."

The police department issued just under 59,500 parking permits last year to officers, civilian employees, and auxiliary officers, according to the analysis. About 8,600 of the parking permits issued to police department employees authorize holders to park in designated spaces citywide that would otherwise garner parking tickets, such as commercial and truck parking zones, for an unlimited amount of the time. The other 59,876 parking permits provide parking in designated zones that are generally near a police precinct.

While the department has already decided on a number of cuts, including revoking parking permits for auxiliary officers, and has begun distributing new placards for 2008, other agencies are still using placards from last year. Mr. Skyler said the Department of Transportation would begin distributing new permits in May to most city agencies, except for the Department of Education, which will receive new permits for the beginning of next school year.

Last year the police department also provided another about 6,000 unlimited time parking permits to other law enforcement agencies, with 5,144 going to federal agencies and 964 to the district attorneys' offices.

Traditionally, multiple city agencies have printed their own permits. The Department of Education last year printed about 63,000 placards that allow employees to park in designated areas, usually near schools. The fire department and the state Office of Court Administration each printed and provided

employees with unlimited-time parking placards.

Under Mr. Bloomberg's new permit system, only the police department and the Department of Transportation will have the authority to distribute parking placards to city agencies.

"This sheds light onto why it's been such a hard problem to crack down on. There were so many agencies making their own placards that it made it difficult for the police to do their job," Mr. Skyler said.

The Department of Transportation last year provided 5,600 permits to various city agencies. The permits authorized similar privileges to those of the unlimited-time placards, except the holder can only park in a spot for up to three hours.

While the city is calling for slashing all agency parking permits by at least 20%, Mr. Skyler said he expects the cuts to be even greater.

"We're going to meet with the individual agencies and see what their needs are," he said. "We're going to use common sense criteria."