

Los Angeles Daily News

Examples of city fraud

Sunday, August 24, 2003 - Investigators and "fraud cops" are cracking down on the waste and corruption that costs Los Angeles County taxpayers an estimated \$1 billion a year. Here are some of the problems they've encountered:

- Los Angeles County employees viewed pornography, online gambling and other inappropriate Web sites 90 percent of the time they accessed the Internet during one week in 2002, investigators say. The county is now in the process of installing filtering software to combat the problem.

"We've had several cases where people are running their own Web sites on our servers with anything from hosting pornography-related Web sites to running a Russian bride type of service," said Supervising Investigator Kris Kademian.

- A Department of Mental Health worker racked up a \$97,923 bill calling a psychic hotline. She was sentenced to 30 days in jail, placed on five years' probation and ordered to repay the money.
- Fire Department warehouse workers in Pacoima were allowed by their supervisors to take two to 12 scooters each that had been donated as Christmas toys for needy children.
- An employee in the Registrar-Recorder's Office was sentenced to a year in jail for stealing \$74,213 from a cash register through voided transactions.
- An employee used a payroll computer to add benefits she was not entitled to and inflated her last paycheck before she retired, resulting in a \$42,433 overpayment.
- Former county planner Emmett Taylor, 65, was arrested last year on 97 counts of forgery and falsification of public records in an alleged land fraud case that cost the county hundreds of thousands of dollars to correct. Taylor pleaded not guilty to the charges, and a preliminary hearing is set for Sept. 3.
- Two probation department employees mismanaged funds for a department picnic, resulting in a \$29,953 shortage.
- In a half-dozen cases, Children's Services workers stole thousands of bus tokens intended for use by foster children and their parents.
- A Natural History Museum employee authorized the sale last year of a donated bus to another employee at a substantial discount. The converted bus was then resold at a \$2,500 profit to the employee.
- An Arcadia dentist who worked for juvenile health services was sentenced to three years' probation for falsifying his time cards, indicating he was working at county clinics when he was really working in private practice.