

MAYOR HAWKINS CRACKS DOWN ON SICK TIME ABUSE

"In a time of fiscal crisis, I am appalled that some city employees are driving up overtime costs at the expense of Orange taxpayers. I will not allow this to continue.

All policies regarding overtime will be strictly enforced. Sick time is for when an individual is truly ill. The purpose of sick time is not to enable employees to vacation or take time off. Sick time is not for the purpose of padding pensions. With our tight staffing and reduced manpower, when employees abuse sick time, it puts the safety and health of residents in jeopardy.

Sick leave represents a major cost to Orange taxpayers. In 2010 police personnel called

out sick a total of 1,742 shifts at a cost of approximately \$840,000. Fire personnel called out sick a total of 442 24-hour shifts at a cost of approximately \$620,000. Together this is a cost to taxpayers of approximately \$1,460,000, or the equivalent of nearly a 5% property tax increase. These calculations do not include on the job injuries involving workers compensation. When a police

or fire employee is out sick, the department must fill his shift with another employee who is

paid time and a half overtime for working beyond his assigned hours.

To stop this abuse, I have instructed all supervisors to enforce the confinement restriction that requires personnel who have called out sick to be in their homes during the hours of their shift. Home checks have been conducted. Sick time abuse also renders personnel ineligible for second

jobs or extra duty assignments. We are taking disciplinary action against sick time abusers

where appropriate.

Prior to my administration officers were allowed to go "negative sick" meaning they were allowed to use more sick time than they had available. Under my administration, officers will be docked for using sick time that they have not earned.

As Mayor, I work for our residents and taxpayers and so do all of our city employees. With a

terrible national financial crisis and Governor Christie's budget cuts, we have less money to spend, but that has not reduced our responsibility to keep our citizens safe and secure. We can get through this crisis and build a brighter future for Orange, but only if all of us, citizens, taxpayers, and employees work harder and make sacrifices. In times like these, we cannot afford employees who abuse sick time and overtime, ignore work rules, and endanger the safety of citizens whether as a protest against cutbacks or as a tactic to do less and get paid more."