

# City of Miami



PEDRO G. HERNANDEZ, P.E.  
City Manager

Ms. Shirley E. Richardson  
Executive Director  
Civilian Investigative Panel  
155 South Miami Ave., Penthouse 1-B  
Miami, Florida 33130

Dear Ms. Richardson:

Re: Case #08-047-CIP/City of Miami Internal Affairs #07-174N

Thank you for your letter dated March 13, 2008 regarding the above-referenced case. Your letter makes reference to the fact that a CIP claimant, Mr. Nozza, was allegedly told that the City of Miami does not generate reports on stolen temporary tags. Your letter then indicates several of the CIP's recommendations in light of the alleged policy.

First, it is important to note that a salient fact is missing from the CIP's investigation and review of the incident. That salient fact is the temporary tag in question was expired. An expired temporary tag lacks any intrinsic value. Ironically, placing the stolen expired temporary tag on another vehicle would draw more attention to the subject and provide probable cause for a police stop.

In your letter you indicated that "Panel members expressed dismay that the Miami Police Department's policy apparently calls for no formal reporting of stolen temporary vehicle tags, especially in light of the fact that vehicle tags are linked and cross-referenced to an individual's personal information." The CIP's dismay is unnecessary in this instance because, first, there is no such policy, and second, the temporary tags are not, in fact, linked and cross-referenced to an individual's personal information. The temporary tags are actually linked and cross-referenced to the dealer who issued the temporary tag. Consequently, Mr. Nozza's identity was never in jeopardy because of the stolen tag.

The attached article from an Orlando television station, entitled "Temporary Tags Are Criminals Best Friends" provides an interesting, and neutral, insight into why temporary vehicle tags are tough to trace and of very little investigative value.



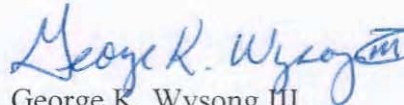
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Additionally, there are no reported cases that I could find of any individuals accused of stealing an expired temporary tag.

Therefore, since the victim of a stolen expired temporary tag is not in any jeopardy of identity theft and the tags will likely not provide any potential investigative leads, the City of Miami Police Department has determined that its policies are adequate as written.

Very truly yours,



George K. Wysong III  
Assistant City Attorney  
On behalf of the Miami Police Department

GKW/gkw

attachment

c: Pedro G. Hernandez, City Manager

# WESH.com

Temporary Tags Are Criminals Best Friends

## ***Editor's Note: Verbatim Script From WESH 11 P.M. Thursday***

POSTED: 11:29 am EST March 10, 2006  
UPDATED: 11:54 am EST March 10, 2006

**ORLANDO, Fla.** -- Temporary car tags are easy to counterfeit and tough to trace.

The simple piece of cardboard, which is issued by the state, is wanted by thieves, reported WESH 2 I-Team reporter Michelle Meredith.

"You can see this expires at the end of this month," said Trooper Kim Miller, of the Florida Highway Patrol.

Every year, the state of Florida prints over 2 million temporary tags. You usually get one if you buy a new car.

"Yeah, that matches the VIN that's up here," Miller said.

You see them everywhere. They look like no big deal. Yet rarely has the state managed to create something so hated by law enforcement.

"Temp tags in the past have made it difficult to find these people," Miller said. "If not impossible."

And so loved by criminals. To make a fake one, all you need is a copy machine.


Temporary tags are a criminal's best friend because the system used to track temporary tags is so out-of-date, very often it's a criminals ticket to freedom.

What's the problem? Permanent tags are issued to you, in your name, with your address. Temporary tags are issued to car dealers, and surprisingly enough ...

"When I ran it, it comes back, 'Not in the database,'" Miller said.

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 **Video: Temp Tags**

Law enforcement can't pull it up. They have to call DMV, then call the car dealer, like Dennis Hadd at McNamara Pontiac.

"Then they have to call the car dealership and find out which customer they issued it to," Hadd said.

This can take hours, even days on a weekend.

Now, factor in problem No. 2 -- is the tag or the info on the tag even legitimate? Temporary tags are easy to reproduce.

Temporary tags are even easier to alter. It's a fill-in-the-blank piece of cardboard. With just a little white-out, you can change the VIN or expiration date.

Temporary tags are hot commodities. People steal them, sell them, print them in mass.

But this month, the love-hate relationship will come to end, at least in Orlando.

In Orlando, the state is rolling out a pilot program for a brand-new temporary tag. They're colorful and harder to counterfeit, with the VIN number printed right on it. And, best of all, when law enforcement runs a check on the new tags, they'll get a name -- just like a permanent tag.

"It will make our jobs so much easier," Miller said.

The new temporary tags will appear statewide in about six months.

✉ *To comment on this story, send an e-mail to [Michelle Meredith](mailto:Michelle.Meredith@wesh.com).*

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