

HPD clerk charged with identity theft

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A 22-year-old Houston police records clerk has been charged with trying to steal someone's identity to buy at least \$2,800 in merchandise and gift cards.

Helen Burch Walker, who also uses the last name Tatum, was charged Friday afternoon with felony forgery and two counts of possession of a controlled substance, said HPD's public information officer Sgt. Nate McDuell.

HPD's measures to ensure the security of citizens' personal information include conducting extensive background checks on all employees and allowing access to such information to specified staffers, he said. Walker, a temporary clerk hired in June, was authorized for access, he said.

HPD's records division handles various reports that often include such personal information as social security numbers and driver license numbers provided by citizens who are filing or requesting documents.

McDuell said he did not readily know how many cases there have been involving identity theft by HPD employees, but that there have been such cases that resulted in termination and/or prosecution of HPD staff.

"I'm sure that it has happened in the past," he said. "You've got a (police) department with 5,000 or 6,000 employees."

Walker is accused of using someone else's name, social security number and date of birth at Sears at Greenspoint Mall on Friday around 4:45 p.m..

McDuell said he did not know whether Walker tried to open a credit card under someone else's name or any details of how the alleged purchase attempts took place.

Walker is accused of trying to buy jewelry - the transaction was declined.

She is accused of then trying to purchase about \$2,800 in merchandise and gift cards, he said.

That transaction was flagged, and the store worker notified security.

When she was arrested, Walker was in possession of a bottle of 19 Xanax pills, the prescription for which was under someone else's name, and six tablets of "ecstasy."

The identity Walker is accused of using may be that of a 20-year-old woman who used the services of HPD's records division last month while obtaining a background clearance letter for a Visa she needed for a trip to Chile.

The woman's father, a former prosecutor for the Harris County District Attorney's Office who did not want his or his daughter's name used, said he and his daughter went to HPD's records department on July 18.

He said that while there, his daughter provided personal information, as well as the date she was leaving to study at a university in Chile.

The woman left for her trip on Thursday, a day before Walker was arrested at the department store.