

Video Catches Hospital 'Dumping' Incident

by Ina Jaffe
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Union Rescue Mission

A taxi cab pulls a U-turn to the entrance to the Union Rescue Mission.

The woman, identified as Carol Reyes of Gardena, shuffles along the sidewalk toward the entrance to the mission.

Mission worker Regina Chambers meets Reyes at the entrance and convinces her to come inside.

Video: Surveillance Video Shows Homeless Hospital Patient Carol Reyes Arriving at the Union Rescue Mission

For many months, Los Angeles city officials have complained that regional hospitals are dropping off their indigent patients in the city's tough Skid Row area. On Wednesday, officials at a homeless shelter released a videotape that allegedly catches one hospital in the act. The incident has become part of an ongoing investigation that could result in criminal or civil penalties.

Security cameras outside the Union Rescue Mission, the city's largest homeless shelter, show a taxi pulling a U-turn in front of the building. Several seconds later, an elderly woman in a hospital gown shuffles into view. She appears to have only hospital socks on her feet, and walks in the street for a while before turning back to the mission entrance.

Mission worker Regina Chambers met the woman outside, later identified as Carol Reyes, a homeless resident of the city of Gardena, a dozen miles south of downtown Los Angeles.

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"When I first approached her, she was very disoriented, didn't know where she was or what she was doing," Chambers says. "All she knew is that she had been to a hospital."

It was later determined that Reyes was released from the Kaiser Permanente hospital in the city of Bellflower, 16 miles southeast of the mission.

City Council member Jan Perry, whose district includes L.A.'s Skid Row, says hospitals may be dumping their homeless patients in downtown Los Angeles because the cities hosting the hospitals don't want to deal with their homeless problem.

"We have a very high concentration of services in a small geographic area," Perry says. "And for municipalities who don't want to... extend themselves to the homeless, it's an easy excuse to just bring them over here and leave them here."

Los Angeles city prosecutors have been investigating the dumping of patients on Skid Row for the past three months to see whether state or federal laws have been broken. The videotape of Reyes will now be part of that investigation.