

# ***In Dallas, Tickets for Not Speaking English***

**By The Associated Press**

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DALLAS (AP) Dallas police officers have improperly cited drivers for not being able to speak English 38 times in the past three years, Chief David Kunkle said Friday.

The discovery came after a woman was pulled over earlier this month for making an illegal U-turn and was given a ticket for being a “non-English-speaking driver.”

Chief Kunkle said the citations were disappointing for Dallas, a city where Hispanics make up 44 percent of the more than one million residents and where many other residents are Southeast Asian refugees.

“I was, I guess, surprised and stunned,” the chief said of the ticketing. “We are a very diverse community.”

Chief Kunkle said his department’s computer system for citations had a pull-down menu that included a law requiring drivers of commercial vehicles to speak English. He said he believed that federal law had been misapplied to local drivers of private vehicles.

At least six officers wrote the citations, including one who wrote five of them, Chief Kunkle said at a news conference. The officers and their commanders are under investigation, and the Dallas police also plan to look beyond the last three years to see whether other citations turn up, he said.

On Oct. 2, Ernestina Mondragon was pulled over by Officer Gary Bromley, a rookie who was still under supervised training. Officer Bromley gave Ms. Mondragon a ticket for not speaking English, along with a citation for making an illegal U-turn and failing to carry her driver’s license.

“I wanted to tell him,” Ms. Mondragon said in Spanish on Friday. “I couldn’t talk back to him out of respect.”

Ms. Mondragon was driving her 11-year-old daughter to school when Officer Bromley stopped her. She had forgotten her purse with her license in it while darting out the door that morning after her daughter missed the school bus.

“I felt humiliated, sad,” she said. “I wanted to cry, but I couldn’t. The anger wouldn’t let me.”

During the exchange between her and the officer, Ms. Mondragon said, she had used the limited English words and phrases she knew.

“He asked me if I spoke English,” she said. “I said I speak a little and understand it.”

Ms. Mondragon said court staff members had seemed puzzled by the charge. The court ultimately dismissed the “non-English-speaking” ticket and driver’s license citation after Ms. Mondragon presented her license.

Chief Kunkle said the outcome of the other 37 citations for not speaking English was unclear.

Ms. Mondragon said that she had been surprised to hear that others were also cited and that she was glad she said something so the ticketing could stop. She said she and her family were considering a lawsuit.

From now on, the Dallas police will not give commercial drivers tickets for being unable to speak English, Chief Kunkle said, adding that was a job for other law enforcement agencies.

As part of their training, Dallas police recruits hear from various minorities in the city, Chief Kunkle said.

Texas offers the written part of its driver’s license test in Spanish, said Tom Vinger, a spokesman for the Department of Public Safety.