

CENSUS CounterParts

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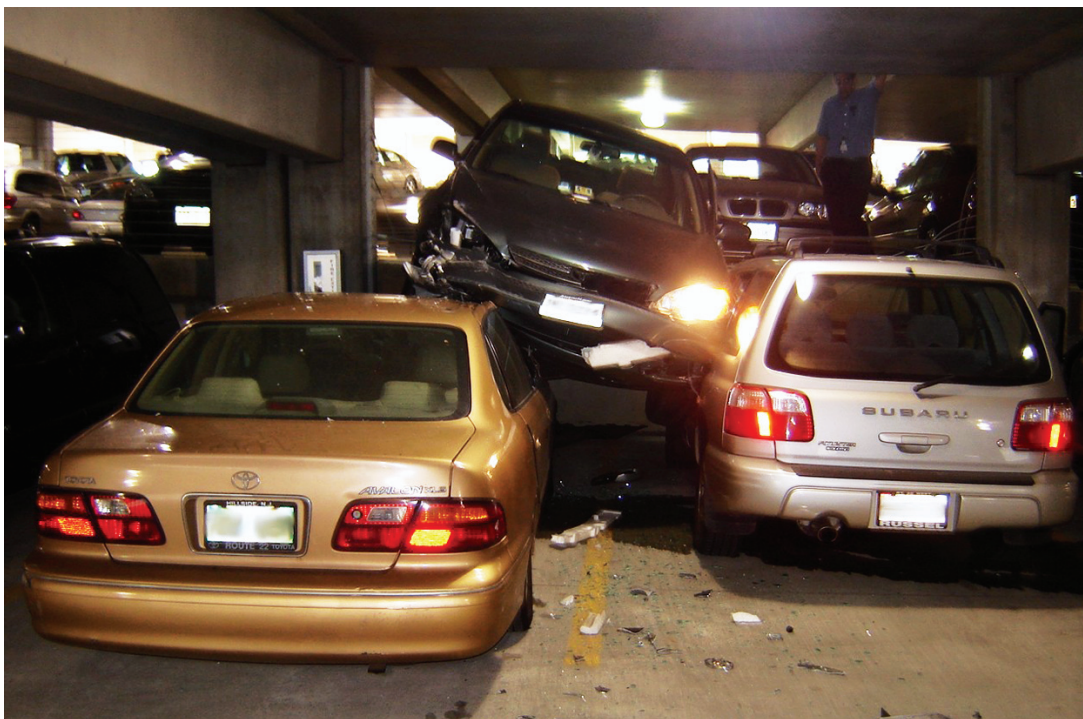


Photo by Stephen Suddeth

A three-car pileup in June reinforces the notion that extra care needs to be taken in the new garages.

Slow Speeds Paramount in Garages

By MONTY WOOD
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

A recent crash that destroyed three cars renewed concerns about safe driving in the new headquarters parking garages.

A Census Bureau employee mistakenly hit the gas pedal instead of the brake while trying to leave the garage after work. The car broke through retaining cables and landed on top of two cars on a lower level.

A General Services Administration official said safety in the parking garages is compromised when employees drive too fast — accidental or not.

“If everyone adheres to the speed limit and traffic procedures, then there should not be any problem,” said Jag Bhargava, project executive with the General Services Administration. “The garage is safe for use and has been designed and constructed to meet building code requirements and standards.”

The posted speed limit in the garage is 5 mph, and the cables are designed to stop cars going no faster than that speed. There are 12 braided cables on each level of the garages — six are 19 mm (three-fourths of an inch) thick and the other six are 8 mm (less than a half inch). This conforms to the International Building Code.

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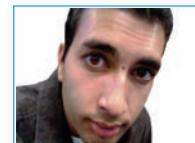


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USCENSUSBUREAU

Helping You Make Informed Decisions

Shahryar Rizvi Among the Funniest Feds

By MONTY WOOD
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

"I work at the Census Bureau in Suitland, Maryland, on the D.C. border. But it's not that good part of D.C. that tourists want to go to ... it's that bad part of D.C. that tourists always end up at and no longer become tourists."

That's just one of many lines that got laughs for Shahryar Rizvi at the recent 2007 Funniest Fed Competition at Arlington (Va.) Cinema N Drafthouse. The stand-up comedy contest featured dozens of federal government employees competing for \$250 and a guest spot at a comedy lounge.

Shahryar — an IT specialist in the Technologies Management Office — has been performing onstage for a few years now. The 26-year-old tailored his routine to play off some of the stereotypes of government employees — such as being underpaid.

"My rich friends from college said, 'Shahry, you've got to go skydiving.' I said, 'Skydiving? Oh, my God, what's that like?' And they said, 'Dude, it's just like driving a Porsche.'"

Shahryar advanced to the semifinals held June 21 but fell one vote shy of moving on to the finals the next night. Freddi Vernell, a 27-year-old with the Federal Aviation Administration, was named the Funniest Fed. Jeff Maurer, a 27-year-old from the Environmental Protection Agency, placed second.

"Most of us do these local comedy competitions on a regular basis and we just thought this one wouldn't be anything extraordinary," Shahryar said. "But it got a lot of publicity. The Washington Post picked up on it, and I was interviewed by Voice of America. It's been a great experience."

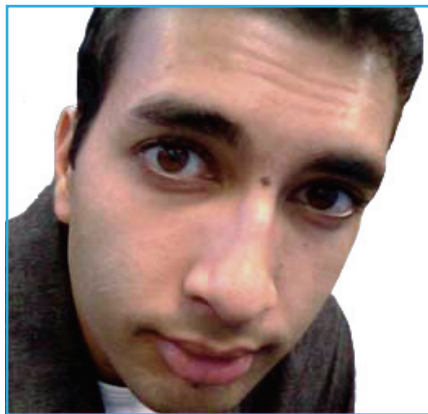
He began his comedy hobby several years ago while attending the University of Maryland-Baltimore County. He entered a comedy contest and placed third.

"I almost backed out. The place was sold out — 800 people," Shahryar said. "I did it, and after the first joke it just clicked. By far, it was the most frightening experience of my life."



Census Bureau IT specialist Shahryar Rizvi (upper right) advanced to the semifinals at the first Funniest Fed Competition.

Photo courtesy of The Washington Post



Shahryar Rizvi snapped this picture with a cell phone camera and uses it as a publicity photo.

Photo by Shahryar Rizvi

Shahryar's talents go beyond software development and stand-up comedy. He has written a few scripts, including co-writing a pilot for a sitcom that was a finalist in the 2004 fall/winter Acclaim Film and Television competition. His sitcom, "Independents," was about 20-somethings fresh out of college and on their own in D.C. The characters also happened to work at the Census Bureau.

"This was before I was even a Census employee," he said. "I just wanted my characters to work at a government agency that didn't seem like it had

much going on. I'd like to turn it into a show, but for the sake of humor, it won't be too accurate of what a Census employee really does."

Shahryar, who is of Pakistani descent but was born and raised in Prince George's County, continues to perform onstage. He recently did a two-night show at the Bethesda Hyatt.

"My wife and I went to the dollar store and she got one of those toilet cleaners. You know how the good stuff turns your water blue? Well, this turns your water yellow. I work for the Census Bureau, what do you expect? Sure I'm a GS-12, but I'm a GS-12 at the Census Bureau. In census years, that's nothing."

The contest's popularity is giving Shahryar another chance to prove he's the funniest federal employee. On Sept. 19, at the Riot Act Comedy Club in Washington, the promoter is bringing back the five semifinalists plus Shahryar because he had the most votes on an online poll.

You can watch a video clip of Shahryar's earlier performance at www.funnyfeds.com and www.washingtonpost.com. The Funniest Fed Web site is www.funniestfed.com.