



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS SECTION – PLANS GROUP**



**2016 Winter Storm Jonas  
January 22 - 27th, 2016  
After Action Issues Submission**

Date: February 10, 2016

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**SUMMARY:**

On Friday January 22, 2016 Montgomery County was impacted by one of the largest winter storms to ever hit the region. In just over 24 hours we had snow accumulations of 30” - 38” combined with significant wind and low temperatures. Crews operating in the field experienced a rise in the number of calls as well as extreme difficulty responding to calls due to the depth of the snow.

<b>MCFRS EVENT TOTALS FRIDAY JAN 22, 2016 - TUESDAY JAN 26, 2016</b>	
<u>Call Type</u>	<u>*Incident Count</u>
ADAPTIVE (SINGLE UNIT)	244
ADAPTIVE (2 AND 1)	90
ALS1	561
ALS2	73
BLS	831
BOMB SQUAD	2
FULL ASSIGNMENT	10
FULL ASSIGNMENT – HIGH RISE	2
HAZMAT	2
SERVICE CALL	144
SYSTEM	0
TOTAL	1959



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Planning for the event began on Tuesday January 19, 2016 and as a result the following operational enhancements were put into place.

### **STAFFING ENHANCEMENTS:**

- 2nd DOC
- ECC up-staffed by 2 personnel
- MAB726 & MAB722 staffed one per unit (staffed with MFF and up)
- Up-staffs - 4<sup>th</sup> person on E702, E720, E726, T706, T710, T716, AT718, AT719, T725, T731, T734, AT735, & RS729 (normal rules)
- B/C's drivers one per unit (BC then down)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Safety Officer @ FS20
- Five DHS plows will be staffed at FS16, FS25, FS26, FS28, FS34 (one MFF per unit)
- Life Safety Task Force (Plow, Pepco, & 2 Sheriffs) at FS32 (one MFF per unit)
- National Guard Resources - FS26 and FS22
- 2 sets of equipment placed at FS32 should additional utilities need to be placed in service.

### **LFRD ENHANCEMENTS:**

- Light duty plows (FS3, FS15, FS10, FS8, FS11, FS5, RS2, FS24)
- FS3 – Full staffing
- FS5 – M705
- FS8 – M708C
- FS10 – A710 and extra staffing
- FS11 – Extra staffing
- FS14 – 3<sup>rd</sup> on M714
- FS15 – A715 and 1 Special Service

### **OTHER SECTIONS:**

- Operations Room 2nd Floor PSHQ Staffed (MCFRS, MCPD and MC Sheriffs)
- EOC staffed by EMG staff on 1/22 (F/R will staff EOC with 2)
- CMF - Staffed with 2 crew & 1 crew chief
- FCC - On-Call (see phone list)
- Logistics – Bob Freeman or Leslie Maxam
- Facilities – Lynnwood Powers
- IT – Richard Ballmann or Lucy Song
- FROMS open on Friday, but closed over the weekend
- PSTA closed on 1/22 & 1/23

### **Operational Changes:**

- Condition Red will be used as needed by the ECC Supervisor with consultation of the DOC.
- Reduced Box assignments when under condition red to 3 Eng, 2 SS, 1 EMS, 1 B/C.



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Overall the Joint MCFRS and MCPD management team were very pleased with the Public Safety Operations during this year's snow event.

However, in an effort to make sure we are constantly improving MCFRS planning and operations for large scale winter weather events such as Winter Storm Jonas a After Action Survey was sent to those that participated in the event.

Questions Asked:

What went well?

What did not go well?

Lessons learned?

Suggestions for improvement?

As stated above, it was felt that the event as a whole went very well, however, there are always issues and lessons to be learned. Based on the responses received as well as our own observations the following issues were identified and are outlined in the remainder of this document. We have included both a brief background and any recommendations that were offered.

### **COMMUNICATIONS:**

#### **PRE-EVENT:**

**Lack of Communication to the field:** Concerns were raised that a large number of people within our organization were not made aware of the fact that we were planning for this storm. They also felt that the "Plan" (what we were doing in response to this weather event) was not communicated prior to implementation.

#### **Recommendation:**

Increased and Earlier Communication between the Planning Section and the Field. Insure information is distributed to the DOC's 48 - 72 hours pre-incident (during the planning stage). This will allow time to push that information out to the stations giving the employees a better idea of the enhancements and plans that are being developed.



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### **DURING EVENT:**

**Communications with Sheriff's Office:** Sheriff's Deputies can listen to Fire Department Frequencies, however they cannot transmit on our frequencies. As part of our Life Safety Task Force(s) the ability to communicate with our personnel on our frequencies is critical.

### **Recommendation:**

Program the Sheriff's Deputies portable radio's with the proper keys to allow them to communicate directly on Fire Rescue Frequencies.

**Communications with MD National Guard Units:** National Guard Units do not come with radios capable of communicating with Fire Rescue or Police.

### **Recommendation:**

Upon their arrival issue National Guard Units a portable radio capable of communicating with county resources.

### **RESOURCE REQUESTS:**

**National Guard Vehicles:** Resource/Vehicles that were requested and arrived were not the most appropriate for the mission.

### **Recommendation:**

Communicate with the National Guard in advance and insure the proper resource is requested, based on capabilities.

**Station Preparation:** Lack of Preparation led to Stations that had issues that needed to be solved short notice. We should not have been out distributing cots in the middle of the night.

### **Recommendation:**

Reinforce/Remind Station Commanders and Station Captains of the need to plan ahead and request any needed equipment or station repairs prior to a weather event occurring. Similar to how we handled Chain Saws in the past, we need to have cot's delivered and stored by station/battalion and then issued/dropped off before it snows. This will lessen and/or prevent the need to handle issues during the event.



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**Station Supply Shortage:** Supply Shortage - Ice Melt and Snow Shovels

**Recommendation:**

Insure all stations/work sites have adequate supply of Ice Melt and Snow Shovels PRE-Storm. Maintain a supply of Snow Shovels and Ice Melt in our warehouse in order to address any shortages during an event.

**Plow Coverage:** Inadequate “Large” Plow Coverage Up County

**Recommendation:**

Work with MCDOT and request an additional “Large Plow” to be deployed “Up County” anytime we are forecasted to receive > 24” of snow accumulation

**STAFFING:**

**EOC Staffing Procedure:** In adequate plan to adequately and equitably staff the EOC during extended events.

**Recommendation:**

Move the scheduling and hiring process for EOC Staffing into Telestaff. This will allow us to hire personnel using existing rules/procedures and insure that staffing is maintained throughout the event.

**Housing and Support of National Guard Assets:** MD National Guard Assets were housed at multiple locations throughout the county with very different levels of support.

**Recommendation:**

Work with OEMHS to develop a resource management plan, to include the housing, care, and feeding of National Guard Assets.



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### **OPERATIONS:**

**Transport of Dead Bodies:** There was confusion over the handling of deceased individuals during a large event where the normal procedures/processes could be followed.

#### **Recommendation:**

MCPD, MCFRS Medical Director, MIEMSS, and the State Office of Medical Examiners develop a protocol/procedure for handling human remains during a disaster.

**Routine Transport of Medical Patients (Dialysis):** Confusion over “who” is responsible for the management and coordination of routine medical requests.

#### **Recommendation:**

Formalize the process by which Montgomery County Department of Health will coordinate and handle these requests. Fire Rescue involvement in this process should only be considered when it is a “True Medical Emergency”

### **Fleet:**

**Spare Vehicles in the way and unavailable:** Vehicles parked in open parking lots became snowed in and inhibited snow removal in those lots.

#### **Recommendation:**

Pre-Storm - Relocate Spare/Reserve Fire Rescue Vehicles to County Owned Parking Garages where they can be stored out of the snow and out of the way of snow removal equipment.

**Selection and Staffing of “ALL” Primary Units to 4 Personnel:** We did not account for proper staffing at Fire Station 40 as well as a couple others (17, R2 as an example) This ultimately led to failures and undermanned responses.

#### **Recommendation:**

During pre-planning insure that “ALL” Units/Stations are considered and appropriate staffing adjustments encompasses ALL Units.