



MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

SPECIAL OPERATIONS SECTION – PLANS GROUP



2015 Montgomery County Agricultural Fair

August 14-22, 2015

After Action Issues Submission

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SUMMARY:

This year the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair occurred August 14-22, 2015 at the Montgomery County Fair Ground located in Gaithersburg, Maryland. As in previous years MCFRS and MCPD worked extremely well with each other, operating a joint Public Safety Base of Operations. It was estimated that over the course of the 9 days, attendance topped 225,000 people.

MCFRS divided Operations into 2 Groups (Operations and Public Education).

OPERATIONS:

MCFRS Units responded to a total of 64 Incidents. 2 Fire and 62 EMS incidents resulting in 3 BLS and 20 ALS Transports to the hospital.

PUBLIC EDUCATION:

Over the course of the week MCFRS personnel and outside volunteers staffed the Fire Rescue Public Education Tent (Car Seat Education, Fire Safety Education, and Senior Outreach) as well as the GWGVFD Fire Safety Trailer. They documented close to 4000 contacts.

Overall the Joint MCFRS and MCPD management team was very pleased with the Public Safety Operations at this year's county fair. As a team MCFRS and MCPD were able to provide the necessary Fire Rescue and Police support required to insure the safety and well being of the close to 250,000 people that attended and/or worked at this year's fair.



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In an effort to make sure we are constantly improving MCFRS planning and operations for large scale public events such as the county fair, a MCFRS After Action Review (AAR) meeting was held at PSHQ on September 30, 2015 between B/C Ogren and Jim Stanton. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss what went well, lessons learned, any issues, and any 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. The issues identified are outlined in the remainder of this document, followed by a brief background and recommendations.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

OPERATIONS ISSUES:

Issue #1:

Need for a larger Public Safety Base of Operations (Layout appeared smaller)

Summary: Numerous members of the organization commented on the fact that the “Public Safety Base of Operations” appeared to be smaller, with less room for apparatus and people. A request has been made to see if we could get a larger compound. The fact is the footprint assigned to Fire Rescue and the Police as not changed in many, many years. In 2014 we actually gained a little space when it was decided to remove one of the tents (Police Lock-Up Tent) from the layout. This year, however, there was a slight (accidental) change in the positioning of the Large Tent. When the contractor set up the large tent, they inadvertently placed it 15’ - 20’ south of the intended location, which ended up shifting the compound layout decreasing the area available to park display apparatus.

Recommendation: It is our belief that the original BoO Layout is fundamentally sound and should remain substantially unchanged. We will however, develop a more detailed Map of the compound layout and insure that we have on-site representation when the tents are being placed to prevent them from being placed incorrectly.

Issue #2:

Shuttle Bus Driver/ System was not reliable.

Summary: At the After action meeting it was brought up that there were several complaints that people had difficulty arranging for/ contacting the shuttle bus driver and there were significant delays in getting from Station 8 to the Fair Grounds. This was the 1st we had heard about this issue and without specific details it is impossible to know exactly what



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happened. It is true, however, that the “Shuttle Driver” position was not an official position on the roster and it was filled in different ways on different days, leading to inconsistency.

Recommendation: Make the “Shuttle Bus Driver” an official position on the Staffing Chart, ensuring it is staffed during every operational period. Develop better documentation of the request procedure and insure that information is disseminated to all personnel who will be coming to the fair grounds.

Issue #3:

Makeup of the MCFRS Command Team needs to change.

Summary: Leading up to this year's fair there was concern expressed by members of MCVFRA over the makeup and assignment of positions within the event command structure. They felt that not assigning the LFRD Chief's as the “Incident Commander” was insulting and demeaning to them and they should be the “Incident Commander” when operating at the fair. A significant amount of time was spent to educate those with concerns on how the Command Structure was set up and what the roles of the individuals assigned to those positions truly meant.

It was believed that this issue had been resolved. However, during the After Action meeting it was brought up again that there were still individuals that had concerns over how the ICS Positions were being assigned. As of this writing MCFRS Special Operations Section had not received any complaints from command staff that actually operated at the fair.

Recommendation: Based on the success of the past years operations, No Change to the Event Command Structure is recommended. It is however, recommended that there be a mandatory Pre-Fair Meeting for all Command Officers with Special Operations and any LFRD Command Officer interested in operating at the Fair. This will insure everyone is operating on the same page and has all the same information.

Issue #4:

Unprofessional Behavior

Summary: This year there were a number of instances of MCFRS personnel acting in less than a professional manor. MCFRS received complaints that personnel were doing things such as attempting to enter the Fair without paying, drag racing golf carts, conducting water extinguisher fights, driving carts into restricted areas, and other less serious transgressions. The individuals involved were identified, however, it is unclear what discipline had been issued by the individuals LFRD.



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Recommendation: While there is a need for some flexibility (no two instances are exactly the same) it is obvious that this behavior cannot be tolerated. Expectations and consequences need to be established up front and there needs to be consistent enforcement of the rules. Based on the fact that there seems to be a number of repeat offenders it is recommended that if the individual(s) involved can be identified they should be immediately removed from the fairgrounds. Further they should not be allowed to work at the fair in the future. Their agency should investigate the incident and report back to the Fire Chief as to how it was handled.

Issue #5:

Apparatus not having appropriate staffing.

Summary: Apparatus continues to report to the Fair Grounds without proper staffing. This year we had AFRA's report without their medic, units arrive without properly certified drivers, lack of an officer, and units arrive under staffed. ALL units that report to the fair need to be fully staffed and available for recall by the Duty Operations Chief should it become necessary. Apparatus recall was not needed this year, however, it did happen twice in 2014.

Recommendation: All departments wanting assist with staffing the fair shall be re-educated on the staffing requirements and understanding will be validated. Any unit that shows up at the fair without proper staffing will be sent home.

Issue #6:

There needs to be a system in place to verify the ICS Status and qualifications of individuals operating at the fair.

Summary: This year we had individuals show up and operate, or attempt to operate in positions that were outside their certifications.

Recommendations: Update Position Descriptions in the Tactical Operations Plan to include the minimum qualifications for each position. Include those minimum qualifications on the staffing form, so there is no confusion over the necessary qualifications. Insure that all this information is passed on to all the members of MCFRS who will be responsible for making staffing decisions. Require that each corporations staffing plan be submitted and signed off on by the LFRD Chief or POC prior to the submission deadline (TBD).



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Issue #7:

Delayed Relief

Summary: There were multiple days where relief arrived late to the fair, causing field staffing issues. Historically a 1700 hours relief schedule has been used to accommodate our Field Staffing Schedule, insuring “Daywork Crews” were released on time. LFRD crews have struggled to meet the 1700 hours relief schedule. .

Recommendation: Improve communication, and insure that all groups providing staffing for the fair are aware and understand the need for timely relief. Change shift relief from 1700 to 1800 hours. Identify and communicate any issue in advance so they can be planned for.

Issue #8:

Staffing coordination with the LFRD’s needs to be improved.

Summary: In addition to the issues identified in #5, #6, and #7 there were days that LFRD’s had committed to staff the event and even as late as the day of, we had no idea what staffing was being provided. On other days the number and capabilities of the individuals that showed up was vastly different than what had been promised. They showed up with far less qualified individuals than promised, they showed up with significantly more qualified individuals than promised, and we had multiple days that they showed up with dozens of people who were not qualified to do anything. This led to large numbers of personnel standing around doing nothing, short notice staffing requests from operations as well as a number of units being returned to service because they were not needed. Since the Duty Operations Chief makes the decision on what activities to support on a given day taking into account the staffing committed to the fair, there ended up being important activities that were canceled when they did not need to be. It is important to remember that we are not at the fair as “Attendees” we are at the fair to provide a service and we need to do that in the most efficient way possible.

Recommendation: Fair Staffing Plans will be signed off on, submitted, and approved well in advanced, allowing for issues to be identified and both Fair Operations and the Duty Operations Chief to plan accordingly.



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Issue #9:

Command trailer size, configuration, and location improved.

Summary: It is the opinion of the command staff, MCFRS Plans, and MCFRS logistics that the size and the layout of the command trailer could be significantly improved. The “office” sections at either end of the trailer were too small and the center open area was too big, essentially wasted space.

Recommendation: Use a “Command Post” and IMT Trailer in lieu of a construction trailer. If not possible, it is recommended that we work with the Trailer Contractor and see if there are different configurations available that might better suit our needs. It is also recommended that we consider rotating the CP 90 degrees and use it to help divide the Public Safety Compound into an Operational/Public Area and Command/Parking Area.

PUBLIC EDUCATION ISSUES:

Issue #1:

Inadequate Public Education Supplies

Summary: Staff assigned to the public education tent felt that there were not enough educational supplies to hand out to the public.

Recommendation: During the planning process, meet with Public Education leaders and make sure that all the supplies we need for the event have been purchased.

Issue #2:

Need to improve signage and overall marketing of Public education Tent.

Summary: Staff assigned to the public education tent felt that the Tent was not properly identified and needed to be more easily identifiable.



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Recommendation: Improve the signs and banners used to identify the MCFRS Information Tent and move the tent back from the Midway allowing for displays in front of the tent.

Issue #3:

Tent Size and Location should be re-evaluated

Summary: Staff felt that the tent should be moved back from the midway and possibly a little larger.

Recommendation: Rent a 20' x 30' tent instead of the 20' x 20' we had this year. Then move the tent away from the midway in order to increase the ability to market the tent.

Issue #4:

Need to improve planning and coordination between Fair Operations and Pub Ed.

Summary: Staff felt that the planning for the public education tent should have been done further in advance and been more inclusive.

Recommendation: Agreed, planning will start earlier and involve Public Education, PIO/Media, Recruiting, Car Seats, Elderly Outreach, and Social Media.