

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service

FIRE CHIEF'S GENERAL ORDER

NUMBER: 09-20

October 20, 2009

TO: All MCFRS Personnel

FROM: Fire Chief Richard Bowers



SUBJECT: Dispatch Changes – Polling Units for Events

Beginning **November 1, 2009**, the Emergency Communication Center (ECC) will cease the ***routine polling*** of units ***available on the air (AOR)*** before dispatch. ECC defines polling as the "...*verbal querying of a unit that is AOR, preceded by an alert tone, to which the unit officer responds with its location.*" Polling delays the dispatch process at ECC, and the purpose of this *Fire Chief General Order* is to expedite the dispatch process, and reduce overall response times. To achieve this goal, the ECC Section Chief will implement the necessary internal operating procedures at the ECC to reduce dispatch delays associated with polling units. To enact this change, ECC will apply the guidelines, statements, and/or adjustments below.

1. The 800 MHz voice radio system is the primary means of dispatch for MCFRS. Station alerting, personnel paging, MDCs, and other methods of event notification are secondary dispatch systems. All on-duty MCFRS personnel must maintain situational awareness by monitoring the primary dispatch Talk-Group (7-Alpha), and being prepared for a timely response, even when engaging in station training, in-service training, public education details, or similar duties.
2. ECC will *no longer routinely poll* units that are AOR before dispatch. ECC will normally prompt the first due unit(s) that is AOR by saying, "**Attention Unit xx,**" and then dispatch the event. However, *at the discretion of the ECC supervisor*, there may be circumstances when polling units that are AOR is both prudent and acceptable.
3. When dispatching *full assignments*, ECC will **not** poll units that are AOR, and will **not** announce the units due on the event that are AOR. ECC will activate the pre-alert tone and give the pre-alert information, then dispatch the event and give the Initial Vocal Announcement.
4. ECC will announce the box area for all dispatches.

5. When a station watch is required, ECC will not manually alert stations. Station officers must assign personnel to remain at the watch desk to monitor the primary dispatch Talk-Group (7-Alpha) and the ECC telephone line for dispatches. That person must record the address and nature of the event for the dispatched unit(s) for that station, and then alert the crew for response. ECC will normally prompt a station to prepare for recording by saying, "**Attention Station xx**," and then dispatch the event.
6. Unit officers must ensure that *ECC has their correct unit status at all times*. For all units that are AOR, unit officers must accurately status their location on their MDCs, or verbally status them with ECC. When in-service units are moving through multiple response areas (e.g., E712 is moving to the PSTA), unit officers must appropriately status their destination location on their MDCs, or verbally status them with ECC.
7. Medic units and ambulances clearing the hospital should status AOR **only** when they have returned to their assigned battalion.
8. Unit officers are reminded that it is their duty to respond to emergency incidents. If a unit officer hears an event dispatched and knows the unit is *significantly* closer, the unit officer must advise ECC by bidding on the event.
9. Unit officers must refrain from bidding on events by *asking ECC* if they are closer than another unit. When a unit officer bids on an event, *ECC will assume* that the bidding unit officer *knows* where the event is, and *knows* that the unit is significantly closer than the dispatched unit. The unit bidding will be assigned to the event, and the other unit will be placed in service.
10. Unit officers must refrain from bidding on *full assignments*, unless: 1. they will be the first or second due unit at the event; or 2. they are *significantly closer* than a similar dispatched unit; or 3. there is an obvious error in dispatch. Ambulances and medic units **must not** bid on *full assignments*.
11. When a unit officer bids on a *full assignment*, or on any other assignment for which a Chief Officer is responding, the bid request will be referred to the tactical talk group of the response. The first due Battalion Chief or rostered LFRD Chief will determine whether the unit may respond on the incident, and what position it should take in the response order. Other Chief Officers can adjust assignments/approve requests to respond **only** if they are on the scene and have assumed command.

This *Fire Chief's General Order* modifies several sections of FRC Policy 22-03AM, **Communications Manual**, including: *Pre-Alert; Initial Vocal Announcement - Single/Multiple Unit Responses, Non-Full Assignments; Initial Vocal Announcement-Full Assignments; Second Vocal Announcement - All Dispatched Events; and Bidding on an Event.*

If you have questions, call ECC Battalion Chief John Kinsley at (240) 773-7101, or email john.kinsley@montgomerycountymd.gov.