



# COTTAGE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

## GENERAL ORDER

### SUBJECT: NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS

### NEW REVISED RESCINDS

APPROVED: *GM*  
GEORGIA MILTENBERGER  
ACTING CHIEF OF POLICE

Effective Date 8/22/2018

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#### **I. POLICY**

- A. The Department recognizes the importance of planning for natural and man-made disasters and will have appropriate plans so that Department members responding to such disasters will have written guidelines and procedures to follow.
- B. In the event of a major catastrophe or disaster, the Prince George's County Emergency Operations Plan will be activated and will take precedence, over the Cottage City's plan. However, there are many situations that arise which do not require the activation of the County's Emergency Operations Plan, but for which planning and a coordinated response is important.
- C. Therefore, the Department will have a written plan (copies of which are issued to the Sergeant and Lieutenant, and one copy is available to all personnel in the Unusual Occurrences File Cabinet), and written procedures contained in this general order from the perspective of a "first responder" to provide guidance and/or to handle the situation that is serious, but not serious enough to warrant activation of the County Plan.

#### **II. AUTHORITY TO ACTIVATE THE COUNTY PLAN**

- A. Only the Chief of Police May Request Activation

1. Cottage City is a part to a Memorandum of Understanding included in the Prince George's County Emergency Operations Plan, and members will abide by the terms and conditions outlined in the M.O.U. when the Prince George's County Emergency Operations Plan is activated. Only the Chief of Police, or person designated to perform the Chief's duties in his/her absence, is authorized to request the plan's activation in the Town.
  2. When the plan has been activated, the Prince George's County Chief Administrative Officer will assume command of the emergency situation which caused the plan's activation.
- B. Adherence to Cottage City Procedures until County Plan Activation until the County's Emergency Operations Plan is activated; officers will adhere to the procedures and guidelines outlined in this directive and in the Department's Emergency Operations Plan(s).

### **III. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

#### **A. Communication**

1. During the response to, and at the scene of any disaster, effective communications are perhaps the single most important element to a successful resolution.
2. Members of the Department will request additional personnel to attempt to contain the situation until specialized resources and equipment arrive, and keep communications and Department supervisors and command staff informed of any situation to which they respond, with frequent updates, if possible.
3. Members utilizing radio communications must be aware that many citizens, members of the media, and inquisitive bystanders have scanners and will not hesitate to respond to a scene where police activity is "in-progress." Therefore, officers will use appropriate radio codes and "ten signals" during communications between themselves and ECC, and during conversations between officers.
4. Members utilizing radio communications must also be aware that in some instances the use of the police mobile and/or portable radio is ill-advised because of the possibility of detonating an explosive device.
  - a. If explosives are involved in any disaster situation, officers should use telephone communication if possible.

- b. If a police radio can be used, officers will ensure that they are a safe distance from the scene before a radio transmission is made.
5. If possible, an alternate radio channel should be requested from communications so that communications pertaining to the disaster will not interfere with other radio traffic.

B. Field Command Post

1. The first-arriving officer will assume command of the scene (from a police perspective - the fire incident commander will be in-charge of the overall scene) until the arrival of a higher-ranking police officer, at which time command will be relinquished to the higher-ranking officer.
2. After quickly assessing the situation's magnitude, the first arriving officer should establish a field command post, which can be anything from a police vehicle to a formal structure.
3. The first arriving officer's vehicle is the incident's temporary "field command post" until a supervisor determines that it is not necessary or the supervisor formally establishes a field command post.
4. When the first arriving officer establishes a temporary field command post, he/she should consider locating it:
  - a. In an area near the scene (if not at the scene) that ensures its security and the safety of the personnel staffing it,
  - b. In the event of a hazardous materials incident (HAZMAT), it should be located a safe distance from the scene and upwind, if possible,
  - c. The temporary field command post should:
    - Be suitably equipped with communications equipment, including a mobile transceiver, a portable transceiver, and if possible, a phone. If warranted, Cottage City officers will request PGPD Mobile Command Post, which is equipped with all the necessary equipment;
    - Contain a map of the area in which the incident is located, and if necessary, the first arriving officer should request one of the additional officers responding to bring a City map to the command post; and,

- Be located near the Fire/Rescue Command Post.

C. Casualty Information

1. Until the arrival of officers of higher rank, the first arriving officer will attempt to learn if, and how many persons are injured or killed so that higher-ranking officers can be briefed upon their arrival.
2. If members of the media have begun to gather at or near the scene, the first arriving officer's responsibility will be to contain and control the scene and not the media. The first arriving officer will not release casualty information to members of the media, but will refer them to the appropriate media liaison representative.

D. Community Relations/Public Information

1. The first arriving officer will brief the first arriving officer of higher rank so that information released to the media and public is coordinated and accurate.
2. If the first arriving officer has been directed by an officer of higher- rank to provide information to the media, the release of information known to the officer will be governed by the following:
  - a. The information shall be accurate and reliable,
  - b. The information will not be released if not considered to be in the public domain (i.e., next-of-kin not yet notified, sensitive or confidential information pertaining to an on-going investigation, etc.),
  - c. The information will be factual and not conjecture or opinions.
3. When responding to media inquiries, the phrase "No Comment" should not be used as this has both an affirmative and a negative connotation depending on the structure of the question.
  - A. If an officer does not know the answer, but its disclosure should not be made public at that time, the officer should indicate that "at this particular time" an answer cannot be provided.

- c. If the officer does not know the answer, but its disclosure should not be made public at that time, the officer should indicate that "at this particular time" an answer cannot be provided.
  4. Representatives of the media will be allowed closer access to the scene than persons not affiliated with the media, as long as the access will not hinder police/fire/rescue efforts, and it is safe.
  5. Under no circumstances will any member of the Department cover or attempt to cover a media representative's camera lens or interfere with a media representative's lawful activities.
- E. Notification of, and Support from Other Agencies
1. If the first arriving officer ascertains that personnel from other agencies are needed, the request for them will be made via communications.
  2. Requests for support/response from other agencies should be made after a careful assessment of why they are needed and what communications should tell them upon notification (i.e. airplane crash, fuel truck involved in accident leaking fluid, etc.)
  3. Notwithstanding the need for fire/rescue to conduct their operations, the first responding officer should make every effort to protect the scene, especially in the event of a plane crash so that federal investigators can attempt to determine the crash's probable cause.
- F. Public Facility Security
1. If a public facility is threatened, the first arriving officer should assess the situation and make the responding supervisor aware of it.
  2. If the facility's security is in immediate danger, the first responding officer should direct additional responding officers to the facility until the supervisor arrives.
  3. If the public facility is owned by a utility company (i.e., W.S.S.C., P.E.P.C.O., etc.), the first arriving officer should request ECC to notify them and have their security officers respond to secure their property.

#### G. Military Support (Martial Law)

If the first arriving officer, after his/her assessment of the overall situation, believes that military support is warranted, he/she will make the responding supervisor aware of this and discuss it with him/her upon their arrival.

#### H. Traffic Control

1. The first arriving officer should direct other responding officers to areas where traffic direction and control are needed in order to:
  - a. Keep traffic moving away from and around the incident, and
  - b. Ensure that the scene is secured and protected.
2. Officers directing or controlling traffic at or around the scene of the incident will:
  - a. Position their police vehicles in a manner that protects them and the scene;
  - b. Wear high-visibility clothing;
  - c. Allow media representatives closer access to the scene than private citizens, as long as the access will not hinder police/fire/rescue operations and/or the media representatives' safety;
  - d. Effectively use flares, traffic cones, and portable signs, depending upon the nature of the incident;
  - e. Be aware that at the scene of a hazardous materials leak/spill, or a natural gas leak, the ignition of flares may be prohibited;
  - f. Consider all downed power lines to be energized unless positively told differently by Fire/Rescue or PEPCO personnel;
  - g. Keep traffic moving and not allow motorists to stop unnecessarily, and advise motorists of alternate routes, if possible; and,
  - h. Place a traffic light on flashing at an intersection where an officer will be manually controlling traffic.

#### I. De-Escalation Procedures

De-escalation procedures will be addressed by the Incident's Commander, and Department members will assist as necessary to bring about a systematic and gradual return to normalcy.

#### J. Rumor Control

1. With any major situation, rumors develop and spread throughout the affected community and beyond. Rumors can not only be counterproductive, but can also pose a danger to incident participants.
2. The first arriving officer must be cognizant that his/her actions, words, radio transmissions, etc., can help to dispel rumors, and therefore will refrain from:
  - a. Speculating about the cause(s) of the incident;
  - b. Stating opinions as to fault, and
  - c. Disclosing any information about the incident that members of the public or media could hear (in-person, over-the-air, etc.), which is unsupported by facts.

#### K. Post-Occurrences Duties

1. Tasks, duties, and responsibilities for officers who responded to the incident will be assigned by the supervisor or Incident Commander.
2. The officer assigned to write the Event Report or the communications car will request a copy of communication's radio and/or telephone tape, being mindful that this could take several days.
3. All Department members who participated in the incident will coordinate with the report writer so the Event Report can accurately reflect what each officer did.
4. The supervisor will arrange for a critique of the incident and a formal report will be prepared by the supervisor and submitted to the Chief of Police (if the Chief of Police was not the incident commander) and the City Manager for review and approval, prior to it being released to the media.
5. After the report has been approved, dissemination of it will be as directed by the Chief of Police and/or Cottage City Commission.

L. Transportation

In the event transportation is needed away from the area affected by the incident, communications division will be requested to contact the following to determine if, and to what extent, service can be provided:

1. County Bus,
2. Metro and local taxi companies.