



**Division 06** **Fire and Rescue Operations**

**Chapter 10 – Citizen Services Group**

March 2009

**POLICY**

The Fire/EMS Department has been directed to reintegrate the initial phases of assisting displaced residents into its emergency response operations. The following guidelines will be implemented by command and supervisory personnel in emergency and non-emergency situations.

The Incident Commander (IC) shall establish a Citizen Services Group on any incident where a need is identified to provide support or extended service to citizens during or after incident mitigation. Additionally, the guidelines herein shall also be utilized in situations that are not an emergency incident or event, but does result in displacement.

The Citizen Services Group shall be established by the IC at any incident resulting in inhabitability, displacement, relocation, or significant inconvenience to citizens as early as practical.

A request for dispatch of the Citizen Services Unit should be made to the Fire/EMS Operations Center via Public Safety Communications (PSC). In some instances, a direct request may be made via phone or in person; however, Operations Center personnel should ensure that PSC is informed of the request for this resource. The IC should assign on-scene resources or request additional resources to provide immediate services, if necessary, and/or to assist the Citizen Services Unit at prolonged or massive incidents.

**DEFINITIONS**

N/A

When a Citizen Services Unit is unavailable, the IC will be responsible for any tasks normally delegated to this resource. The Fire/EMS Operations Center will maintain additional information which can be used to facilitate this mission and will have access to additional resources maintained by the Office of Emergency Management (OEM).

The radio designations for the CSU is CSU-801, CSU-802, etc.

**PROCEDURES**

**1. General Principle**

Utilization of a Citizen Services Group within incident organization is an essential aspect of service delivery, and serves as the liaison between the Fire/EMS Department and citizens, their representatives, or property representatives involved in or affected by the incident. The IC is always accountable for ensuring that need requests within the scope of the Department are provided, prior to clearing the scene.

**3. Basic Duties**

The Citizen Services Group should utilize the following guidelines when providing services to the affected parties. It should be noted that other needs may be identified and should be addressed as part of the Department's customer service goals:

**2. Implementation**



- Provide blankets, water, and a shelter, where practical to do so, (i.e. apparatus, neighbor's house, Citizen Services Group Bus, etc). When possible a single location should be utilized.
- Provide an explanation to what's happening, what we are doing and why, how long we expect to take until the incident is under control.
- Obtain from occupant/responsible party, any significant information regarding the structure and/or its contents that might assist the IC tactically with the operation and inform the IC of this information.
- Encourage displaced citizens to contact their insurance carrier, restoration company, etc., as soon as possible.
- Encourage displaced citizens to seek short term assistance from neighbors and family.
- At multifamily structures, work with management to provide shelter to displaced citizens.
- Notify the Red Cross or other necessary agencies and/or individuals as needed.
- When necessary, identify an evacuation site and notify the IC of its establishment and location. This information should also be provided to Fire Prevention personnel, the Public Information Officer, other appropriate agency representative, and relatives.
- Identify any special needs of citizens, as well as any spectators or evacuees, i.e., critical incident debriefing, mental impairment, physical impairment, chronic health concerns, etc., and seek appropriate resources.
- Facilitate reasonable related citizen requests via the IC.
- Provide reasonable on-going service and support until the customer indicates our services are no longer needed.

#### 4. American Red Cross Requests

The Red Cross can assist citizens with temporary shelter and basic needs. Red Cross response will typically be at least one hour. When requesting the Red Cross, provide the following information:

- Address of the incident.
- On-site contact person and phone number.
- Number of displaced adults, children, pets, their location and a phone number if available.

#### 5. Displacement

##### Mass Sheltering

Some incidents or events may require the use of a Mass Shelter. The Citizen Services Group should consider needs and duration, identify available resources and select the best suited shelter location. Planning considerations should include shelter location, transportation needs of those seeking shelter, and use limitations of a potential shelter. The Red Cross and the OEM should be notified of the activation of a mass shelter.

##### Cooling/Warming Centers

Cooling/warming centers are not to be used as mass shelters. Cooling/warming centers are designed to provide a safe place for residents to escape from excessive heat or extreme cold. The OEM shall be responsible for establishing emergency cooling/warming centers. The addendum to this General Order provides a list of several preapproved cooling/warming centers in Prince George's County, including their hours of operation.

Prince George's County Fire/EMS stations should only be used as backup cooling/warming centers after all other resources have been exhausted. Fire/EMS stations used as backup cooling/warming



centers shall close at sun down. These stations will not provide food or sleeping accommodations to residents who are using the station as shelter from the extreme weather conditions.

The OEM will be responsible for monitoring and assisting in backup cooling/warming centers to ensure compliance with applicable environmental health concerns. The addendum to this General Order notes the pre-designated fire/EMS stations that shall be used as backup cooling/warming centers.

The following notification procedures shall be used to activate fire/EMS stations as backup cooling/warming centers:

- OEM shall notify the Office of the Fire Chief and the Duty Chief.
- The Duty Chief shall notify the Operations Center of the backup centers that will be opened.
- The Operations Center shall notify the respective Battalion Chief, Volunteer Chief and/or Career Station Officer.
- The backup cooling/warming center will be opened upon the arrival of personnel assigned by the OEM to monitor the situation.

## 6. Office of Emergency Management Resources

The OEM operates various support vehicles which may be available for use on incidents. The primary resources are made available by contacting the Citizen Services Unit. These units are outfitted with a variety of supplies and equipment that may be used for citizen support, personnel rehabilitation, tripod lighting and a generator, small tools, and salvage resources. Citizen Services Unit 801 also has trailer towing capability.

Additional units include:

- An air conditioned bus with seating for 8-10, a work space, water, tripod lighting, and a generator.
- Four American Red Cross trailers each equipped with 50 cots, 50 blankets, and 50 comfort kits.
- A small bus that is the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services and Amateur Radio Emergency Services (RACES/ARES) Unit mobile command unit.

## 7. Summary

The IC is also responsible for establishing appropriate on scene functional Citizen Support component and supporting relief activities as needed. Once again requests for OEM resources to assist displaced residents should be coordinated through the Fire/EMS Operations Center via PSC or by direct contact. If OEM personnel are unavailable to provide assistance, it is the responsibility of the IC to ensure that assistance is provided by utilizing the guidelines provided and interaction with the Emergency Operations Center.

## REFERENCES

N/A

## FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

Addendum –Approved Primary and Backup Cooling/Warming Stations