

**MEMORANDUM**

September 15, 2020

**TO:** Public Safety Committee

**FROM:** Susan J. Farag, Legislative Analyst

**SUBJECT:** Briefing: Perdido Bay Terrace Significant Incident Review

**PURPOSE:** Briefing, no action required.

Today, the Public Safety Committee will receive a briefing on the Perdido Bay Terrace incident involving the drowning of a 16-year-old swimmer in Goose Creek, in Virginia. Those expected to brief the Committee include:

Chief Scott Goldstein, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue (MCFRS)  
Assistant Police Chief Dinesh Patil, Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD)  
Assistant Fire Chief Ed Radcliffe, MCFRS  
Acting Director Cassandra Onley, Emergency Communications Center (ECC), MCPD

**Background**

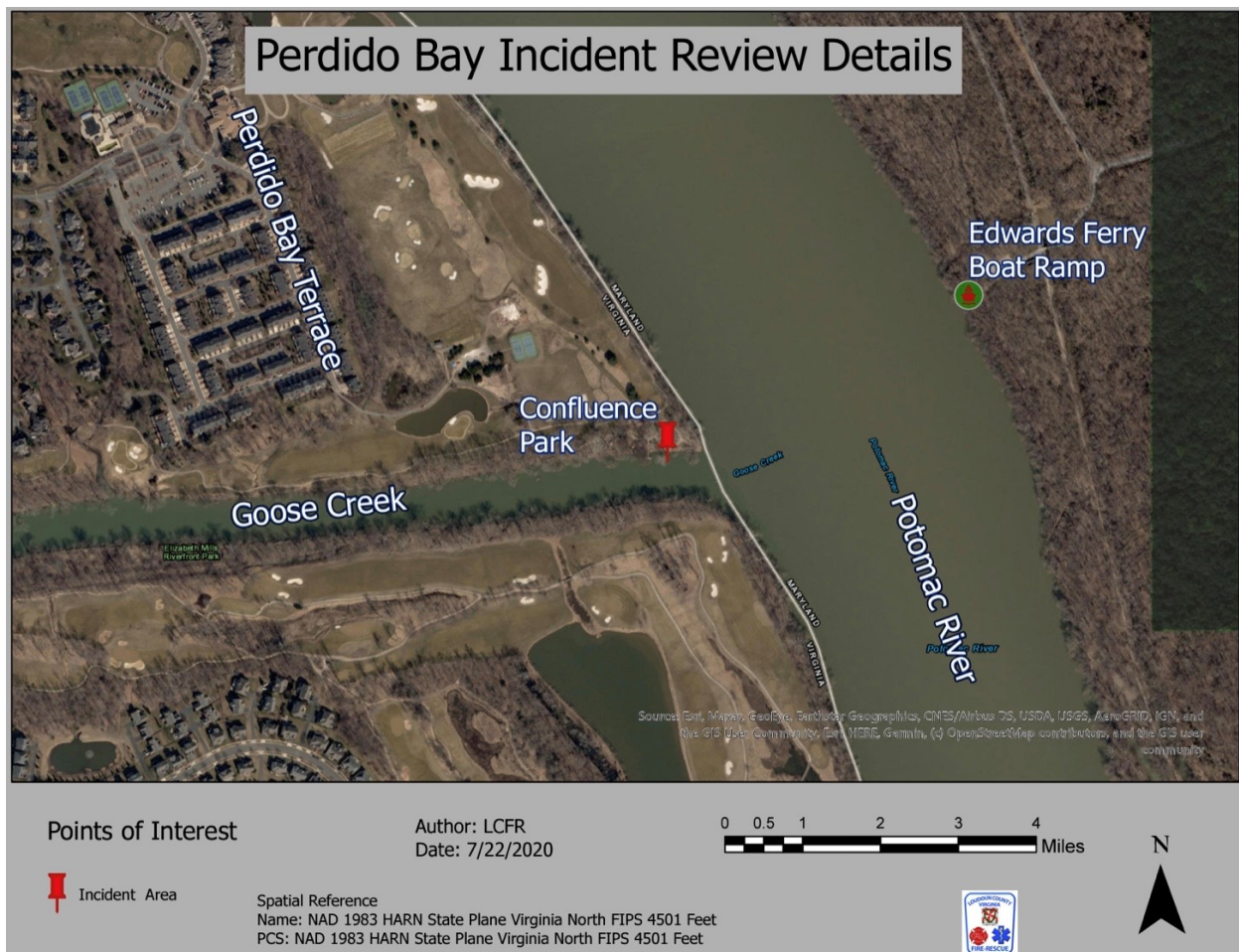
On June 4, 2020, both the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) and Loudoun County Fire and Rescue (LCFR) (Virginia) responded to a call for a reported drowning in Goose Creek, which is in Loudoun County, Virginia and enters onto the Potomac River. The State of Maryland has jurisdiction over the Potomac River, and Montgomery County has both law enforcement and fire rescue jurisdiction for incidents on the river. Potomac River rescues are carried out by MCFRS, even if the incident originates in Virginia. MCFRS has mutual aid agreements with other jurisdictions along the Potomac River and can request assistance when needed.

Both jurisdictions received 911 calls during this incident. Montgomery County received the first call at 17:48 and arrived at the Potomac River at 18:04. Loudoun County received its first 911 call at 18:06. What followed was a series of multiple 911 calls, constant communication between Montgomery County ECC and the Loudoun County ECC, and attempts to determine the precise location of the incident. The incident review ultimately determined that the two counties followed existing procedures, but that these procedures need to be modified to provide a better response to incidents on or near the Potomac River.

A significant incident review team was developed to examine the series of events to understand exactly what occurred. The review team reviewed and analyzed:

- 911 call audio recordings;
- Written statements provided by LCFR personnel who worked the incident;
- Existing policies and procedures addressing emergency responses along the Potomac River;
- Procedures for the dispatching of mutual and automatic aid resources between Loudoun County and jurisdictions along the Potomac River;
- Mutual Aid Response Agreements between Loudoun County and Montgomery County;
- Current and past practices regarding Potomac River responses;
- Training requirements for ECC staff;
- Staffing and organizational structure of both ECCs;
- Phone calls between the two ECCs with respect to this incident;
- Radio traffic in each jurisdiction; and
- Records and notes from each jurisdiction's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system.

A map of the region is included below.



## Sequence of Events<sup>1</sup>

The first 911 call received by any jurisdiction occurred at 17:48:52, and was received by the Montgomery County Emergency Communications Center (ECC). As explained in the Incident Review (© 13), cell phones connect with the nearest cell tower. Calls are then relayed to the local 911 ECC based on tower location, not cell phone location. The Montgomery County ECC call taker was able to determine that the caller was at the mouth of Goose Creek and the Potomac River. The call was then processed as a potential drowning in the Potomac River. Edward's Ferry Boat Ramp in Montgomery County was the closest location from which to dispatch a Fire and Rescue response. MCFRS dispatched two boats, two Swiftwater boats, a Paramedic Rescue Engine, a Medic Unit, and a Battalion Chief. The Paramedic Engine arrived on the scene of Edward's Ferry Boat Ramp at 18:04:34.

At 18:05:23, the Montgomery County ECC called the Loudoun County ECC and notified them that MCFRS was dispatched for a water rescue, but stated that the call originated at the River Creek Country Club, which is on the Virginia side.

At 18:06:21, the LCFR ECC received its first 911 call, where the caller stated, "We called about someone in River Creek and they went to the Maryland side of River Creek and we're on the Virginia side and someone's drowning."

At 18:06:30 LCFR ECC receives another 911 call from the scene. The caller stated, "We're down at the River Creek little park and some kids had called in because a kid they can't find him, he's in the water and it looks like the EMS went to the wrong side of the river, they're over on the Maryland side. We need EMS down here in River Creek, River Creek Community, down at the Confluence Park in River Creek." The LCFR Dispatcher stated to the caller, "ma'am, ma'am, just so you know since he is in the river that's in Montgomery so I do have to transfer you OK." The caller then stated that the address is "River Creek, Confluence Park, River Creek community in Leesburg, not on the Maryland side. The EMS is across the river, we can see them. They're on the wrong side of the river, we are in Goose Creek on the Leesburg side in between River Creek community and Lansdowne community." This was the first time a 911 caller indicated that the victim was in Goose Creek rather than the Potomac River. The 911 caller remained on the phone and stated they were on the Leesburg side and her husband went in the water and found the victim. On a separate 911 call being handled by Montgomery County ECC, call takers were providing chest compression directions so that individuals on the scene could perform CPR.

The Montgomery County ECC Call Taker told Loudoun ECC staff that Montgomery County had dispatched resources and was handling the incident based on the original reported location of the victim. Subsequent calls were still conferenced with Loudoun County because the callers stated they were in Loudoun County.

The Loudoun County Dispatcher asked the Montgomery County ECC Call Taker if any units from LCFR were needed. The Montgomery County ECC Call Taker asked if Loudoun knew where to go, and the LCFR Dispatcher said no and asked for an address. The Montgomery County

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive (and official) sequence of events, please refer to the [Incident Report](#).

Call Taker stated the address as *18552 Bernido Bay* which the LCFR Dispatcher identified as *Perdido Bay Terrace*.

The LCFR Dispatcher asked what response was required. Montgomery County ECC stated that since the victim was out of the water, a cardiac arrest response would be correct. Loudoun County's Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) incident for 18552 Perdido Bay Terrace was created at 18:15:15 and units were dispatched at 18:16:08. Both LCFR and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office responded.

At 18:20:40 MCFRS Boat 731 was preparing to launch from Edward's Ferry.

At 18:23:23 the first Loudoun County Sheriff was on the scene. At 18:23:46, Montgomery County ECC called LCFR-ECC to confirm that units were responding, and the LCFR Call Taker advised that units had just arrived on scene. At 18:24:46 MCFRS Boat 731 reported motor trouble and requested assistance getting back to shore. At 18:28:57 all MCFRS boats were out of the water. At 18:32:22 a Loudoun County EMS Supervisor was on the scene.

## **Findings**

- Based on the initial 911 call, where the caller stated, "we're like all swimming in the river," Montgomery County ECC processed the call as a Potomac River call and MCFRS resources were dispatched within three minutes of the first 911 call.
- On the day of the incident MC-ECC staffing was at its prescribed level.
- MC-ECC Call Takers and Dispatchers responded to the call in a manner that is consistent with ECC training.
- LCFR-ECC personnel relied on years of training and practice that MCFRS would address river rescue incidents without the need to request assistance from mutual aid jurisdictions, even if the incident originated in Virginia. LCFR-ECC did not create an incident in Loudoun County because Montgomery County did not request mutual aid.
- LCFR-ECC also did not initially use all the geo-verification methods available to enter a location into the CAD.
- While there is no question that the Potomac River is legally owned by Maryland, strict adherence to jurisdictional boundaries may not provide the fastest, most efficient response to 911 callers reporting an emergency.
- Calls received by LCFR-ECC were repeatedly transferred to MC-ECC. MC-ECC Call Takers conferenced callers with LCFR-ECC when the callers stated they were in Loudon. Calls were repeatedly conferenced and staff from both Emergency Communication Centers called one another multiple times. This caused confusion in both centers and frustration for the 911 callers.
- On the day of the incident the on-duty LCFR-ECC Supervisor was training a new employee. The Supervisor was not able to fully engage and maintain situational awareness of the information being received for this incident. Three remaining employees answered 911 calls, business lines, and monitored multiple radio channels simultaneously.

## **Joint Recommendations and Completed Actions**

- 1) A first responder will be sent to all Potomac River incidents. This action will get public safety personnel on both shores to a water incident to provide real-time intelligence to other responding units, or to provide immediate medical care if needed. A first responder is defined as an EMS unit or a fire suppression unit. This recommendation was implemented on June 19. MC-ECC requires the dispatch of a first responder to the Virginia shore for incidents involving the Potomac River. LCFR-ECC implemented this recommendation on June 8. LCFR assets will be dispatched to any incident along Loudoun County's adjoining waterways, regardless of jurisdictional responsibility.
- 2) Montgomery County ECC will be conferenced in all Potomac River incidents after a location and callback phone number have been obtained. If the LCFR-ECC receives a 911 call for a Potomac River incident, the call taker will obtain a location and callback phone number and then conference in MC-ECC. The conferencing process is intended to reduce the number of repetitive questions that the caller must answer and to ensure that both ECCs are receiving the same information. This recommendation was implemented on July 17.
- 3) Questions about specific fire/rescue incidents must be directed to MCFRS personnel at the MC-ECC. If the LCFR-ECC has questions about a specific fire/rescue incident involving MCFRS resources, they should call the MCFRS ECC Administrative line. The MCFRS ECC Administrative line goes directly to MCFRS personnel working on the Operations Floor of the MC-ECC. These are the personnel that will have the most current operational information and are able to communicate directly with the responding field units. This recommendation was implemented on July 16.
- 4) Refer the current Potomac River Rescue, Assistance, and Emergency Incident Response Plan back to the MWCOG Senior Operations Chiefs Committee and Technical Rescue Subcommittee for revision to include the dispatch and response updates as proposed by the Fire Chiefs from Loudoun and Fairfax Counties to the Chairman of the MWCOG Fire Chiefs Committee on June 23, 2020. Montgomery County has been the primary agency to respond to incident involving the Potomac River. Other jurisdictions have grown their water assets in recent years where they may be utilized if their qualified boats are closer than a MCFRS boat. The use of CAD2CAD technology allows for mutual aid dispatches of appropriate resources based on their actual location, rather than by jurisdictional boundaries. This referral was made on June 23, 2020. The Operations Chiefs from MCFRS and LCFR, as well as Fairfax VA and Frederick MD, are currently in discussion about Potomac River responses. The referral was made on June 23.

## **Discussion Issues**

- 1) Precisely locating the cell phone callers was a significant challenge for both jurisdictions. What can or will be done to improve timely location of calls made on cell phones? Does this require better technology, better mapping, better training, or other approach? To what extent does the new technology provided by Next Generation 911 help with more accurate caller locations?
- 2) Does Montgomery County have any large, unmapped areas similar to Confluence Park? How do the ECC and MCFRS/MCPD handle calls in these types of regions in the County?

- 3) How often do these types of Conference Calls with other jurisdictions occur? Do they strain ECC resources? Are there additional staffing or equipment needs in the ECC that would make responses easier?
- 4) While the equipment trouble for MCFRS Boat 731 did not play an impactful role in this particular response, what back-up processes are in place to address these types of equipment failures in river rescues in general?

**This packet contains:**  
Perdido Bay Terrace Significant Incident Report

**Circle #**  
1-77

# Perdido Bay Terrace Significant Incident Review



**September 1, 2020**

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## OVERVIEW

On June 4, 2020 fire and rescue personnel from Montgomery County, Maryland and Loudoun County, Virginia responded to a reported drowning victim at Confluence Park, which is privately owned by the River Creek community, located off of Perdido Bay Terrace in Leesburg, Virginia.

Tragically, the victim, 16 year old Fitz Thomas (“the victim”) could not be resuscitated by the citizen bystanders that first initiated CPR nor the Loudoun County emergency responders who arrived at the victim and took over the resuscitation efforts.

The incident (“the Incident”) occurred at the confluence of the Goose Creek in Loudoun County, Virginia and the Potomac River. Due to the incident’s proximity between Virginia and Maryland, 9-1-1 calls for assistance were received at both Montgomery County and Loudoun County’s Emergency Communications Centers. Efforts to determine the victim’s actual location contributed to a delay in dispatching Loudoun first responders.

Accordingly, on June 7, 2020, Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System Chief Johnson set a mandate to:

*“Initiate a Significant Review of the Perdido Bay Incident focusing on the time the first call was received to either Montgomery or Loudoun County’s dispatch center until the arrival of Loudoun County Fire and Rescue on scene at the patient. This should be a joint investigation with personnel from Montgomery County’s ECC.”*

This Significant Incident Report (“Report”) is a comprehensive and factual review of the Loudoun and Montgomery County Emergency Communications Centers response to calls reporting the victim’s drowning on June 4, 2020.

## METHODOLOGY

Personnel from Loudoun County worked cooperatively with Montgomery County personnel to assess and review the events of June 4 and develop findings, recommendations, and lessons learned by both jurisdictions. This type of review is a standard public safety practice following significant incidents.

The joint Significant Incident Review Team (“Team”) reviewed a wide variety of data and materials, including, but not limited to:

- The audio tapes of the involved 9-1-1 calls received by each Emergency Communications Center
- Review of written statements provided by LCFR personnel working during the incident
- A thorough review of existing policies and procedures addressing emergency response along the Potomac River
- A thorough review of the dispatch of mutual and automatic aid resources between Loudoun County and jurisdictions along the Potomac River

- Mutual Aid Response Agreements between the Loudoun County and Montgomery County
- Current and past practices regarding Potomac River responses
- Training requirements for ECC staff
- Staffing and Organizational Structure of both ECCs
- Detailed review of phone calls between the two ECCs with respect to this incident
- Review of radio traffic in each jurisdiction
- Review of records and notes from each jurisdiction's Computer Aided Dispatch ("CAD") system

The findings in this Report, along with the Team's recommendations, are provided as principles to improve the effectiveness and capabilities of both jurisdictions. The steps placed into action, along with the implementation of the recommendations, are designed to enable LCFR and MCFRS to better communicate with each other and thus have a more coordinated response to incidents on the Potomac River.

## **SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS**

### From LCFR:

Michael Brosan, Acting Assistant Dispatch Supervisor  
 John Caussin, Jr., Assistant Chief  
 Justin Green, Battalion Chief  
 Lydia Hovey, Firefighter  
 Michael Johnson, Battalion Chief

### From MCFRS:

Doug Hinkle, Battalion Chief  
 John Kinsley, Operations Division Chief  
 Ed Radcliffe, Assistant Chief

### From MCPD:

Cassandra Onley, Acting Director, 911 Emergency Communications Center

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Team is grateful to all those who participated in the development of this Report; without their cooperation and assistance, this Report would not have been possible.

Specifically, the Team would like to recognize the following individuals for their assistance with the project and thank them for their contributions and insights.

Amin Alhassan, LCFR GIS Specialist  
 Mark Blackburn, MCPD ECC Quality Assurance Manager  
 Maria Brown, MCFRS Lieutenant  
 Michael Carter, LCFR CAD Analyst  
 Josh Clemente, Proud2Serve Solutions Public Safety Consulting  
 Christopher Cross, LCFR Assistant ECC Manager

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Mary Cullinane, LCSO ECC Manager

Miranda Jackson, MCPD ECC CAD Manager

Elizabeth Mancuso, LCFR CAD Specialist

Kate Nedrich, LCFR GIS Coordinator

Marilynne Pabst, MCFRS Lieutenant

Nicole Pickrell, LCFR Deputy Chief

Craig Schleiden, LCSO Captain

Anthony Scott, MCFRS Captain

Patricia Turner, LCFR ECC Manager

James Williams, LCFR Assistant Chief

## DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Note: all times in this document are expressed using the 24-hour clock.

**9-1-1 Call Conferencing** – The capability to bridge a third party onto an existing call, also known as three way calling. (NENA Master Glossary of 9-1-1 Terminology, NENA-ADM-000.23-2020, January 20, 2020)

**9-1-1 Call Transfer** – A feature which allows the PSAP Telecommunicator to redirect a 9-1-1 call to another location. (NENA Master Glossary of 9-1-1 Terminology, NENA-ADM-000.23-2020, January 20, 2020)

**Computer Aided Dispatch (“CAD”) System** – A software program designed to help emergency communications personnel dispatch emergency incidents by recommending the most appropriate complement of resources based on the location and type of incident.

**CAD2CAD** – Participating jurisdictions within the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (“MWCOG”) sharing fire and Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”) resources through their respective CAD systems through a regional Data Exchange Hub (DEH).

**Emergency Communications Center (“ECC”)** – A facility staffed with personnel trained to process 9-1-1 calls, dispatch resources, and monitor ongoing emergency incidents. Depending on the jurisdiction, these centers can serve fire, EMS, and/or law enforcement agencies.

**Loudoun County Fire and Rescue (“LCFR”)** – A Department of Loudoun County Government.

**Loudoun County Fire Rescue Emergency Communications Center (“LCFR-ECC”)** – The designated PSAP for Loudoun County and a Division of LCFR.

**Loudoun County-Combined Fire Rescue System (“LC-CFRS”)** – The system established by local ordinance to provide fire protection and EMS, and includes the County’s 15 volunteer agencies and LCFR.

**Montgomery County Emergency Communications Center (“MC-ECC”)** – The designated PSAP for Montgomery County, Maryland.

**Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (“MCFRS”)** – A Department of Montgomery County Government.

**Montgomery County Department of Police (“MCPD”)** – A Department of Montgomery County Government providing law enforcement services in that County, which oversees the MC-ECC.

**Next Generation 9-1-1 (“NG911”)** – NG911 is an internet protocol (IP)-based 9-1-1 system that will replace the existing analog 9-1-1 infrastructure. NG911 allows 9-1-1 callers, through mobile and digital devices, to communicate with 9-1-1 call centers, also

known as Public Safety Answering Points. One feature of NG911 includes the ability to share richer data such as videos, images and texts. It also enhances the ability of 9-1-1 call centers to better communicate with each other and improves 9-1-1 system resiliency.<sup>1</sup>

**Public Safety Answering Point (“PSAP”)** – The facility designated to receive 9-1-1 calls for a given jurisdiction.

**Telecommunicator** – An emergency response coordination professional trained to receive, assess, and prioritize emergency requests for assistance, including, but not limited to: determining the location of the emergency being reported, determining the appropriate law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, or combination of those emergency services to respond to the emergency, coordinating the implementation of that emergency response to the location of the emergency, processing requests for assistance from emergency responders. Also known as Call Taker and/or Dispatcher. (NENA Master Glossary of 9-1-1 Terminology, NENA-ADM-000.23-2020, January 20, 2020)

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.911.gov/project\\_ng911publicsafety/firstnet/overviewng911firstnet.html#1](https://www.911.gov/project_ng911publicsafety/firstnet/overviewng911firstnet.html#1), Accessed August 13, 2020

## **BACKGROUND**

This section provides relevant background information on each of the jurisdictions, the respective Emergency Communications Centers, how cellular phone calls are routed, and an overview of the geography of the incident area.

### **LOUDOUN COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

Located 25 miles from Washington, D.C., Loudoun County is 520 square miles in area and contains seven incorporated Towns: Hamilton, Hillsboro, Leesburg, Lovettsville, Middleburg, Purcellville, and Round Hill. Loudoun is a member of both the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (“MWCOCG”) and the National Capital Region (“NCR”).

Loudoun County uses a combination system, comprised of career employees and volunteer members, to provide residents and visitors with efficient and cost-effective fire protection, rescue, and EMS. The LC-CFRS was established by the Board of Supervisors in July 2014 as Chapter 258 of the Codified Ordinances of Loudoun County.

As part of the Combined System, LCFR provides operational, administrative, and logistical support for the 15 volunteer companies, as well as supporting the LC-CFRS Executive Committee and the overall LC-CFRS governance structure. Additionally, LCFR manages many functions for the Combined System, including but not limited to: financial affairs; career and volunteer human resources; health, safety, wellness, and respiratory protection programs; public information; records management and FOIA processing; facilities and apparatus support; logistics and supply distribution; and capital planning services.

The LC-ECC is a section within the Department’s Division of Communications and Support Services. The LCFR-ECC serves as the County’s PSAP for all incoming 9-1-1 calls and texts.

LCFR personnel dispatch Fire-Rescue assets for incidents that require LC-CFRS services. Calls for other public safety entities that provide services within the jurisdictional boundaries of the County, including the Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office (“LCSO”), Leesburg Police Department, Middleburg Police Department, Purcellville Police Department, Virginia State Police, Loudoun County Animal Services, and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) are received and routed to the appropriate agency.

There are 36 full-time positions assigned to the LCFR-ECC:

- One ECC Manager
- One ECC Assistant Manager
- One Communications Training Coordinator
- Four Dispatch Supervisors
- Four Assistant Dispatch Supervisors
- 21 Dispatchers
- Four Call Takers

The LCSO's Emergency Communications Center is co-located with LCFR and is staffed by civilian employees of the Sheriff.

### **LCFR-ECC Operations**

LCFR-ECC personnel are assigned to one of four teams and work a rotating schedule of 12-hour shifts. The schedule consists of two day shifts (0700-1900 hours), followed by two night shifts (1900-0700 hours), with four days off before the schedule pattern repeats.

All LCFR-ECC released Dispatchers are trained to receive and process 9-1-1 calls. All of the shifts in the LCFR-ECC have six to seven assigned personnel.

Newly hired personnel come into the ECC as a Call Taker and must successfully complete the ECC's recruit school, which is approximately eight weeks long and provides staff with a standardized training curriculum that includes:

- Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials ("APCO") Public Safety Telecommunicator
- APCO Fire Service Communications
- Priority Dispatch Emergency Medical Dispatch
- Priority Dispatch Emergency Fire Dispatch – as of July 2020
- Introduction to CAD, 800 MHz radio system, and ECC phone system
- Geographical overview of the County, including common places and landmarks
- Ride alongs with Operations personnel

Following graduation, personnel must complete on-the-job training to be released to operate independently as a Call Taker. Personnel work with a trainer and must demonstrate proficiency answering non-emergency business lines before moving on to answering 9-1-1 calls. The LCFR-ECC uses Priority Dispatch's EMD program to interrogate callers having a medical emergency. As part of the Universal Call Taker ("UCT") initiative, the LCFR-ECC is working toward implementing the Emergency Fire Dispatch program for all other callers. In the meantime, there is no standard script used to question callers reporting non-medical emergencies. Instead, Call Takers rely on their training and experience to gather pertinent information.

When at minimum, LCFR-ECC personnel rotate through four assignments over the course of their shift:

1. Primary responsibility for answering 9-1-1 calls
2. Dispatching units and incidents on 6ALPHA
3. Monitoring units and incidents on 6BRAVO
4. Overflow – responsible for answering business line phone calls, 9-1-1 calls if the primary is busy, and monitoring units assigned to a tactical radio channel for larger, more complex incidents.

Generally, call takers answering 9-1-1 calls are responsible for loading the call into the CAD system and letting the caller know that responders are on the way. Depending on the nature of the call, personnel will either stay on the line with the caller until responders arrive or disconnect to answer additional calls.

Once the incident is loaded into CAD, other LCFR-ECC staff are able to view the incident and add information (e.g., from subsequent 9-1-1 callers or from responding personnel). Dispatchers are primarily responsible for dispatching calls and talking to units responding or on the scene of active incidents. However, since the LCFR-ECC is the PSAP, dispatchers will answer 9-1-1 calls when the call taker position cannot handle all incoming calls. The exception would be when the dispatchers are handling emergency radio traffic such as a mayday communicated by emergency responders.

Assistant Dispatch Supervisors usually are responsible for trainees. If they are not assigned a trainee, they have the same responsibilities as dispatchers for day-to-day operations. They are also responsible for monitoring ongoing calls to make sure other personnel are processing them correctly.

Dispatch Supervisors, as long as the shift is not at minimum levels, are responsible for monitoring active calls to ensure they are being handled properly, answering questions from staff, and transferring emergency response units around the county to ensure adequate coverage if a specific response district is depleted of resources.

Since the LCFR-ECC is the PSAP, supervisors are also responsible for answering 9-1-1 calls if no one else is available or if they are part of the assigned minimum staffing rotation.

### **Staffing and Activity on June 4, 2020**

On June 4, 2020, the LCFR-ECC was staffed with one Assistant Dispatch Supervisor, three Dispatchers, and one Call Taker trainee. The Assistant Dispatch Supervisor was directly overseeing the trainee, in addition to managing operations in the Center. All five personnel started their shift at 0700 hours and were on the first day shift of their shift rotation.

From 1745-1900 hours on June 4, LCFR-ECC staff processed and dispatched nine emergency incidents or CAD notifications:

17:46:50 Fire Alarm – Ashburn  
18:02:32 Notification of Generator Work – Sterling  
18:04:50 Unconscious Person - Ashburn  
18:15:55 Cardiac Arrest – Perdido Bay Terrace  
18:16:12 Outside Fire – Lansdowne  
18:27:58 Seizures – Sterling  
18:33:48 Fire Alarm – Ashburn  
18:36:11 Medical Alarm – Leesburg  
18:52:53 Illness – Ashburn

During the same time period the LCFR-ECC received 19, 9-1-1 calls and 61 administrative calls. The administrative calls include the 9-1-1 calls transferred from Montgomery County and also non-emergency calls. Transferred calls come in through the Center's 10-digit non-emergency administrative lines, not the 9-1-1 trunks.



## **MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

### **Montgomery County, Maryland, 9-1-1 PSAP**

The Montgomery County, Maryland 9-1-1 PSAP falls under the Montgomery County Department of Police. The PSAP personnel consist of 185 civilian/professional staff. In addition, 47 uniformed MCFRS employees are responsible for the dispatch and operations of fire/rescue units.

The PSAP answers 9-1-1 emergency and non-emergency calls. According to the National Emergency Number Association standard, 9-1-1 emergency calls must be answered within 10 seconds. The calls are routed to each call taker using an Automatic Call Distribution configuration, which means the next available call taker will answer the call. In Fiscal Year 2020, the PSAP answered 788,664 calls of which 497,370 were 9-1-1 only calls.

All PSAP Call Takers complete a rigorous six month training program which includes Motorola Solutions PremierOne Computer-Aided-Dispatch System, Mapping, Location Entry, Address Verification, Integrated Call Control, Automatic Location Information and Automatic Number Information, wireless and RapidSOS location data, customer service, and certifications through the International Academy of Emergency Dispatch ("IAED") as an Emergency Telecommunicator, the IAED Protocol Systems for Emergency Fire Dispatch, Emergency Medical Dispatch, and Emergency Police Dispatch. The IAED Protocol Systems are designed to obtain pertinent information by asking standardized questions to include, but not limited to: descriptions of involved persons, vehicles, weapons, and use of alcohol or controlled dangerous substances. Based on the caller's responses to the questions, the Call Taker is able to provide applicable post-dispatch and/or pre-arrival instructions to the caller. Additionally, PSAP Call Takers receive training in river rescue operations and other life safety training, to include but not limited to, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation ("CPR"), and the licensure with the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems.

The Fire/Rescue Dispatchers complete a five month training program which consists of training on the three primary fire dispatch radio talk-groups, Motorola Solutions PremierOne CAD, Mapping, Customer Service, and specific fire dispatch operations.

Daily staffing of the PSAP includes 16 call takers, six police dispatchers, three fire/EMS dispatchers and appropriate supervisors. Staffing was at the minimum complement on June 4, 2020.

On Thursday, June 4, 2020, Montgomery County, Maryland 9-1-1 PSAP answered four calls pertaining to a water rescue reported to be in the Potomac River at Goose Creek/Confluence Park in Loudoun County. MCFRS units were dispatched to the reported drowning at 17:51:46.

Call 1 at 17:48:27 hours was answered within 3 seconds.  
Call 2 at 18:06:50 hours was answered under 1 second.  
Call 3 at 18:07:52 hours was answered under 1 second.  
Call 4 at 18:20:01 hours was answered within 2 seconds.

Call volume was normal for the day and time. The total call volume from 1747-1811 hours was 57 calls.

## **Potomac River Responses**

For operational purposes, MCFRS divides the Potomac River into two sections: above the Seneca Breaks and below the Seneca Breaks. The area above the Seneca Breaks is approximately 20 miles long and the area below the Seneca Breaks is approximately 17 miles long. This division is based upon the characteristics of the river; above Seneca Breaks, the Potomac River tends to be wider, and slower moving whereas below Seneca Breaks, the river becomes narrower, has more rapids, and a much higher speed of the water. The area below the Seneca Breaks is generally considered to be the more dangerous portion of the river.

From January 1, 2018 thru June 3, 2020, MCFRS responded to a total 123 incidents involving the Potomac River. Of those 123 incidents, only seven were in the 20 mile section above the Seneca Breaks. Of the seven incidents above the Seneca Breaks, none of them involved drownings or injured persons in the River; the majority of those incidents were for stranded boaters. All of the incidents above Seneca Breaks were handled by Montgomery County resources.

MCFRS implemented the Incident Response Policy Appendix M (Initial Actions for Water Rescue Incidents) on January 1, 2019 (see Appendix E). The policy describes MCFRS operational response to water rescue incidents to include upstream of the Seneca Breaks at certain water levels, and any incident that does not fall in under this Policy is managed by Special Operations Swift Water Rescue Team Standard Operating Guidelines.

## **MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS**

Loudoun County is a signatory to the *Northern Virginia Emergency Services Mutual Response Agreement*. Under this agreement, jurisdictions participate in a mutual response system that will automatically dispatch the most appropriate response resource(s) available, to an incident location without regard to jurisdictional boundary lines. This agreement also requires jurisdictions to participate in the development of operational guidelines to be used during mutual response incidents. These guidelines address areas such as apparatus response, tactical operations, and incident command. To this end, the Fire & Rescue Departments of Northern Virginia have developed a series of *Procedural Manuals*.

Both Loudoun and Montgomery Counties are signatories to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan (“MAOP”), dated January 15, 2009. The MAOP provides procedures for requesting mutual aid resources from other jurisdictions and includes guidelines on how those resources should be managed. While the MAOP provides that *no jurisdiction/agency shall send assistance unless requested* [by the authority having jurisdiction], there is no language that prohibits a jurisdiction from sending fire/rescue resources once it identifies that the incident is within its jurisdictional boundaries.

## CELLULAR PHONES AND 9-1-1 CALL ROUTING

The Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) regulates interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable in all 50 states. The Commission is the federal agency responsible for implementing and enforcing communications law and regulations.<sup>2</sup>

FCC wireless 9-1-1 rules aim to provide PSAPs with meaningful, accurate location information so that local emergency responders can be dispatched quickly to help wireless 9-1-1 callers.

The FCC's basic 9-1-1 rules require wireless service providers to transmit all 9-1-1 calls to a PSAP, regardless of whether the caller subscribes to the provider's service or not.

Phase I Enhanced 9-1-1 (E911) rules require wireless service providers to provide the PSAP who is in direct receipt of the 9-1-1 call with the telephone number of the originator of a wireless 9-1-1 call and the location of the cell site or base station transmitting the call.

Phase II E911 rules require wireless service providers to transmit the location of a wireless 9-1-1 call, within certain parameters for accuracy. Under the FCC's rules, wireless providers are subject to increasingly stringent 9-1-1 location accuracy requirements almost every year through 2024.<sup>3</sup>

To further understand how calls from the same general area ended up routing to different PSAPs (both Montgomery and Loudoun Counties), the Team gathered background information on cellular technology and requested assistance from a consultant.

Cellular telephone traffic is managed through a network of cellular towers with equipment that emits a wireless signal to cellular telephones. This cellular tower equipment is generally split into sectors (represented as conical zones) which allow calls to be received at a tower location from multiple directions.

Whenever a call is initiated on a cell phone, the cellular tower sector presenting the strongest signal to that phone, usually the closest one pointing in the direction of the caller, will “receive” the call and handle its routing based on the number dialed.

Although prioritized over other telephone traffic, the same is true in the case of a 9-1-1 call. During an emergency, the closest tower sector emitting the strongest signal will “receive” the 9-1-1 call and route it to a 9-1-1 Center/PSAP.

The PSAP where the 9-1-1 call is delivered is based on the physical location of the cellular tower and sector receiving the call, not the caller's actual location. Today's 9-1-1 cellular call routing technology does not provide a means to assure 100 percent accuracy in routing a 9-1-1 call to the PSAP serving the jurisdiction where the emergency caller is actually

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fcc.gov/about/overview>, Accessed July 28, 2020

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/911-wireless-services>, Accessed July 28, 2020

located. 9-1-1 calls that are received by one PSAP and then transferred to another are commonly referred to as “misrouted” calls or “misroutes.”<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1: Example of a Cell Tower Sector

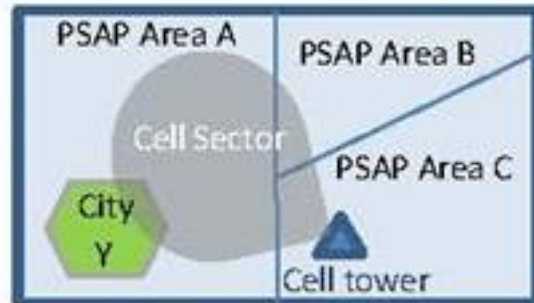


Figure 1 illustrates how a cellular sector works. All calls within the cell sector are routed to PSAP A, even if the caller is actually in the response area for PSAP B or PSAP C.

It then takes time for the telecommunicator at PSAP A to validate the actual location of the caller in PSAP C’s jurisdiction, and additional time to complete the call transfer to PSAP C.

It is not clear how often 9-1-1 calls are misrouted. According to the California Office of Emergency Services, approximately 13 percent of calls to 9-1-1 were transferred from one PSAP to another in California in 2017.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, a 2014 study in Snohomish County, Washington showed that approximately 14 percent of 9-1-1 calls were transferred between PSAPs.<sup>6</sup>

NG911 will introduce a significant improvement in how cellular calls are routed through the national 9-1-1 system. While 9-1-1 call routing is based on the location of a fixed asset (i.e. the cellular tower) in today’s environment, in an NG911 environment routing decisions are accomplished “on the fly” by the network itself before delivering a 9-1-1 call to any PSAP. In other words, the emergency caller’s location is validated through GPS, confirmed to be within the boundaries of a particular jurisdiction providing emergency response services, and then routed to the appropriate PSAP based on this process.

Loudoun County migrated to NG911 in August 2020. Montgomery County is planning to migrate to NG911 in the first quarter of 2021.

There are also commercially available software programs that are able to identify a 9-1-1 caller’s position using the cell phone’s internal GPS. Both Loudoun County and Montgomery County’s ECCs use RapidSOS for this purpose.

All of the 9-1-1 calls reporting the Incident in Confluence Park originated from cellular telephones. Due to the geography of the area and the location of cellular towers, some of

<sup>4</sup> Federal Communications Commission, Notice of Inquiry 18-32.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> [https://proceedings.esri.com/library/userconf/proc15/papers/19\\_248.pdf](https://proceedings.esri.com/library/userconf/proc15/papers/19_248.pdf), Accessed August 7, 2020.

these calls for help were routed to Montgomery County, Maryland's PSAP, while others routed to Loudoun County's PSAP.

## **METHODS FOR LOADING CAD INCIDENT LOCATIONS**

Both Loudoun and Montgomery Counties use Motorola's PremierOne CAD System. This system requires a geo-verified address to "load" a location for an emergency incident. There are multiple ways to enter a location for an emergency incident:

1. Through the Automatic Location Information imported from the 9-1-1 phone system.
2. By manually entering a numerical address.
3. By manually entering the intersection of two roadways.
4. By manually entering a "commonplace" name.
5. By manually entering a Mile Marker, Mile Post, or Exit number.
6. Through the latitude and longitude imported from the Enhanced 911 – Wireless Services (Phase I and Phase II). These can be manually inputted or "dropped" onto the CAD map.
7. CAD Integrated RapidSOS – RapidSOS is a provider for the mobile device-based location for callers using a smartphone that has been RapidSOS enabled. The Montgomery County ECC CAD System has RapidSOS integrated into the CAD System, which automatically performs a query providing RapidSOS information.
8. RapidSOS Portal – A web-based portal available for telecommunicators to input a cellular phone number to identify the location of the caller. Loudoun County ECC uses this portal as an adjunct to the CAD System.

## **RESPONSIBILITY AND JURISDICTION OVER THE POTOMAC RIVER**

The Potomac River is nearly 400 miles long, originating in West Virginia and culminating in the Chesapeake Bay.

Jurisdiction over the Potomac River is held concurrently by the United States Coast Guard for the entire length of the river; by the State of Maryland for the river upstream and downstream of the District of Columbia boundary; by the District of Columbia for the river within the boundaries of the District of Columbia; and by the Commonwealth of Virginia for waters contained inside the point-to-point locations along the Virginia shoreline.

## **RIVER CREEK ON THE POTOMAC**

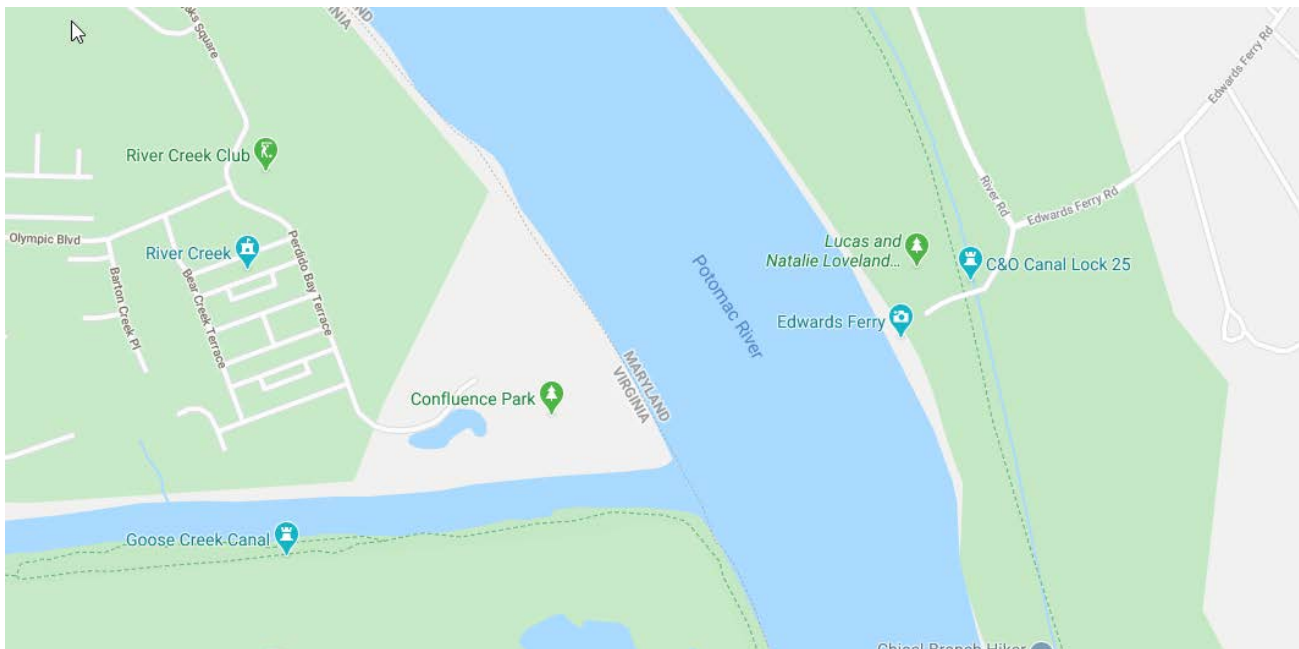
River Creek on the Potomac is a 600+ acre, 1,132 home, gated community encompassing 20 distinct neighborhoods, an 18-hole Ault-Clark championship golf course, the River Creek Club. Fifty percent of the 600+ acres in the community is maintained as undeveloped, open land.

The River Creek community is accessed by two gates off River Creek Parkway. The main gate is at 43232 Olympic Blvd; a secondary gate is located at 43240 Shoal Creek Drive.

## Confluence Park

Confluence Park is privately owned and maintained by the River Creek Homeowners Association. Located at the point where Goose Creek meets the Potomac River, Confluence Park “provides a natural setting in which to relax and savor breathtaking water views, as well as enjoy sports courts, a playground, a picnic area with grills and tables, and a dock for launching canoes, kayaks, or paddle boards.”<sup>7</sup> “In addition, the Park contains a Tot Lot, picnic tables, grills, a basketball court, sand volleyball court, and storage for canoes and kayaks, and a floating dock for boat launching, fishing or relaxing.”<sup>8</sup> There is no mention of swimming in the descriptions of this area.

Confluence Park is accessed via Perdido Bay Terrace or through its connection to seven miles of paths and trails in River Creek. The trail from the end of Perdido Bay Terrace to the boat dock is approximately one-third of a mile long.



<https://www.google.com/maps/@39.1028901,-77.4767979,16z>, Scale = 1:5000. Accessed August 14, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.rivercreekva.com/lifestyle/confluence-park/>, Accessed July 28, 2020

<sup>8</sup> <https://river-creek-confluence-park.business.site/>, Accessed July 28, 2020

## INCIDENT SUMMARY

This section describes the sequence of events pertaining to the Incident, beginning with the initial 9-1-1 call to the MC-ECC and ending when LCFR units arrived on the scene.

The overview was developed using data gathered from 9-1-1 call recordings, non-emergency telephone recordings, written statements from the LCFR-ECC Assistant Manager and the MCFRS uniformed officers who responded to the incident, and CAD notes. In some instances, additional explanatory information is provided in bulleted form in the narrative.

As each jurisdiction uses slightly different software for recording 9-1-1 calls and other telephone lines, the timestamps may be off by a few seconds.

### SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

On June 4, 2020 the victim and a group of friends were swimming across Goose Creek when he went underwater and did not resurface. His friends looked for him, but could not find him.<sup>9</sup>

The first 9-1-1 call from the scene was received by the MC-ECC at 17:48:52. The caller stated that, **“we’re at River Creek, the club in the back, we’re like all swimming in the river. We had a friend swimming and he’s under the water but we like literally cannot find him.”**

The MC-ECC Call Taker asked **“how long have they been there”** to which the 9-1-1 caller responded **“they just got here, they were swimming across and they looked back and he was like gone.”** The MC-ECC Call Taker then asked **“how many minutes,”** the 9-1-1 caller stated **“10”** to which the MC-ECC Call Taker asked **“how long ago did he go under?”** the 9-1-1 caller stated **“like 5.”**

The MC-ECC Call Taker used the caller’s information and the RapidSOS map to identify that the caller was at the mouth of Goose Creek and the Potomac River. The Call Taker processed this incident as a potential drowning in the Potomac River and identified the Edward’s Ferry Boat Ramp in Montgomery County as the closest location to dispatch MCFRS resources.

- As Montgomery County has jurisdiction over incidents occurring in the Potomac River, the MC-ECC Call Taker followed established ECC policy and procedure by creating an incident for MCFRS units. Based on the information provided by the caller, MCFRS resources were dispatched to the Edward’s Ferry Boat Ramp less than three minutes from receipt of the first 9-1-1 call.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/loudoun-county-changes-emergency-response-policy-after-teen-drowns/2336402/>, Accessed July 28, 2020

The MC-ECC Call Taker remained on the phone with the caller for nearly nine minutes, asking the IAED questions, obtaining information about the last known location of the victim, a description of the victim and the caller, and how long the victim had been missing.

Approximately 6 minutes 54 seconds into the 9-1-1 call, the caller reports that she is in Confluence Park and looked up the name using Google Maps.

Montgomery County's CAD incident was created at 17:50:50 and units were dispatched at 17:51:46. MCFRS dispatched two boats (BT731 and BT729), two swiftwater boats (SW730 and SW730B), a Paramedic Rescue Engine from Station 714 (PRE709), a Medic Unit (M714) and a Battalion Chief (BC703).

PRE709 arrived on-scene at the Edward's Ferry Boat Ramp at 18:04:34.

At 18:05:23, MC-ECC called LCFR-ECC and notified them that MCFRS was **“heading to our Edward's Ferry Boat Ramp for a water rescue, and there is like six or seven people in the water, one is in distress and they supposedly have, they originated at the River Creek Country Club, which is your side right?”**

The LCFR-ECC Dispatcher responded **“yeah, I think so, do you, need us to respond or do you want the Sheriff's office to respond at all?”** MC-ECC staff responded that **“they are not asking, our units are not asking us, I am just giving you a heads up, kind of, in case you get a call too.”** The LCFR-ECC Call Taker then stated **“OK, absolutely, I'll go ahead and let the Sheriff's office know, too, so they are aware.”**

- It is common practice to notify a bordering jurisdiction of an active Potomac River incident in case they received 9-1-1 calls.
- Any additional or mutual aid resources are normally requested by the incident commander or other responding units.
- There is no evidence that this notification to LCSO actually occurred.

At 18:06:21, the first 9-1-1 call was received by LCFR-ECC; the caller stated that **“we called about someone in River Creek and they went to the Maryland side of River Creek and we're on the Virginia side and someone's drowning.”** The Dispatcher asked **“are they in Montgomery County?”** and the caller responded **“I don't know, we can see them from across the Potomac.”** The LCFR Dispatcher conferenced the caller in with the MC-ECC.

- This is consistent with long-standing practice in the LCFR-ECC. Personnel are trained that any incident in the Potomac River is to be transferred to the appropriate jurisdiction in Maryland, as the Potomac River is within Maryland's jurisdictional responsibility.
- That the location of the incident was a source of confusion is not immediately apparent from the audio recordings. Often, people calling 9-1-1 do not know the exact address of their location. As a result, commonplace names, such as business names and government owned parks, are loaded into CAD to facilitate dispatching units. Confluence Park, as a privately owned entity, had not been reported to, or added to



Loudoun County GIS records or CAD. As a result of this Incident, on June 24, 2020, LCFR staff completed a CAD update to include Confluence Park as a commonplace location.

In the absence of a street address or CAD-recognized common location name, Call Takers typically use ANI/ALI (Automatic Number Identification/Automatic Location Identification) to determine a caller's location. This technology is predicated upon obtaining the caller's number through the 9-1-1 trunk line. ANI/ALI is not available on a transferred or a conferenced call from another jurisdiction, meaning that LCFR-ECC personnel had to establish callers' locations based solely upon the descriptions given after the calls were conferenced. Understandably, the 9-1-1 callers were frustrated, having already given their location, and being asked to give it again.

Nearly simultaneously, at 18:06:30, LCFR-ECC received its second 9-1-1 call from the scene. The caller said, **"We're down at the River Creek little park and some kids had called in because a kid they can't find him, he's in the water and it looks like the EMS went to the wrong side of the river, they're over on the Maryland side. We need EMS down here in River Creek, River Creek Community, down at the Confluence Park in River Creek. There's a kid that is under the water. They cannot find him."**

The LCFR Dispatcher asks the caller to hold on a moment – during this time the line remained open with the 9-1-1 caller from the scene. As the LCFR-ECC Dispatcher came back on the line, in the background before the LCFR-ECC Dispatcher started to speak, there is an audible statement, **"the river is Montgomery County,"** followed by **"OK."** This was immediately followed by the LCFR-Dispatcher stating to the 9-1-1 caller, **"ma'am, ma'am just so you know since he is in the river that's in Montgomery so I do have to transfer you OK."** The LCFR-ECC Dispatcher stated in her written statement that she confirmed with her LCFR-ECC team that an incident in the River should be transferred to Montgomery County.

Before the MC-ECC was conferenced into this call, the caller states that the victim is actually in Goose Creek and that EMS is across the river. When MC-ECC joins the call, the caller states that the address is, **"River Creek, Confluence Park, River Creek community in Leesburg, not on the Maryland side. The EMS is across the river, we can see them. They're on the wrong side of the river, we are in Goose Creek on the Leesburg side in between River Creek community and Lansdowne community."** She goes on to say that **"we need a Leesburg EMS here immediately."** The caller mentions that the current is going out and clarifies they are at the mouth where Goose Creek flows into the Potomac River.

Just prior to the LCFR Dispatcher disconnecting from the call, the caller can be heard saying that they found the victim.

- As noted above, conferencing in MC-ECC is consistent with long-standing practice in the LCFR-ECC for incidents reported to be in the Potomac River.
- This is the first time a 9-1-1 caller indicates to LCFR-ECC that the victim may be in Goose Creek. However, once conferenced in, the LCFR Dispatcher stayed on the line

and heard the caller state that they were at the mouth of Goose Creek on the Potomac River.

The 9-1-1 caller remained on the phone with MC-ECC; she told Montgomery County that they were on the Leesburg side and her husband went in the water and they found the victim.

Hearing the victim was found on the Virginia shore, the MC-ECC Call Taker conferences the call back to Loudoun at 18:10:15.

The 9-1-1 caller advised LCFR-ECC **“they just pulled a kid out of the water. He’s drowned.”** The caller states she is in **“f\*\*\*ing Loudoun County, Leesburg.”**

The caller appears to set the phone down and can be heard talking to others on the scene. The caller is heard asking for instructions on how to perform CPR and then someone is heard counting a rhythm for compressions. These chest compression instructions were being given by a MC-ECC Call-taker on the 9-1-1 call Montgomery County answered at 18:06:50 hours.

The LCFR Dispatcher attempted to get the caller’s attention when the MC-ECC Call Taker responded to the LCFR Dispatcher that Montgomery is on the line. The MC-ECC Call Taker said the 9-1-1 caller insisted she was on the Loudoun County side and needed assistance in Leesburg. Staff from the two jurisdictions continue talking, while the 9-1-1 caller can be heard in the background.

The LCFR Dispatcher asks if LCFR units need to respond because the call was transferred back to Loudoun. The LCFR Dispatcher asks if she can disconnect and the MC-ECC Call Taker replied that, yes, Loudoun County can disconnect.

- The LCFR-ECC Dispatcher did not immediately respond to the caller’s request to send “Leesburg EMS” to Confluence Park.

Concurrently, at 18:10:12, MC-ECC conferences LCFR-ECC in with a 9-1-1 caller. The caller says they are at **“River Creek, Loudoun County. We’re in Confluence Park inside of River Creek.”** The MC-ECC Call Taker advised the LCFR-ECC Call Taker that the caller said someone had drowned and there was a helicopter. The caller stated that the victim is out of the water on a dock inside of Confluence Park. The MC-ECC Call Taker advised the LCFR Call Taker that **“it looks like we [Montgomery County] are handling it. You can hang up, I’m gonna talk to her.”**

- The MC-ECC Call Taker affirmed to LCFR-ECC staff that Montgomery County had dispatched resources and was handling the incident based upon the original reported location of the victim. Even though Montgomery County was handling the incident, the subsequent calls were conferenced with Loudoun County because the callers indicated they were in Loudoun County.
- The LCFR-ECC Dispatcher was initially unable to identify/recognize a specific location in River Creek, as over 50 percent of the community is maintained as undeveloped

open land and lacks specific addresses or Loudoun County recorded commonplace names such as Confluence Park.

At 18:11:08, the MCPD Search Manager advised the MC-ECC over the fire tactical radio talk group that he had made contact with the 9-1-1 caller and the victim was not breathing; MCPD was trying to get an exact location.

- The MCPD Search Manager is part of the MCPD Managed Search Operations Team. The Team is responsible for the coordination and mitigation of active search operations for endangered missing subjects/evidence.

At 18:12:32, MC-ECC called LCFR-ECC because the 9-1-1 callers were advising that they were in Loudoun County and MC-ECC was working to obtain an exact address. The MC-ECC Dispatcher asked if "**Goose Neck [sic] and Potomac River**" rang a bell, to which the LCFR Dispatcher replied "**it does, I just gotta figure out how to load it.**"

MC-ECC advised that Montgomery County had boats in the water but MCPD were advising the Incident was on Loudoun County's side. The LCFR Dispatcher confirmed that the victim was out of the water on the Loudoun County side at the mouth of the Potomac and asked if the victim was breathing. After asking their dispatcher, MC-ECC advised it was a "**working code.**" LCFR-ECC personnel stated, "**it's a working code?**" and MC-ECC responded "**yes.**" The LCFR-ECC then asked about how old the victim was. MC-ECC advised the victim's approximate age was 17 and CPR was in progress.

Around this same time another LCFR Dispatcher called the MC-ECC, at 18:12:52, to confirm that Montgomery County was handling the "**water rescue drowning**" incident because several calls had been transferred back to Loudoun County. The MC-ECC Call Taker advised that Montgomery had an incident at the Edward's Boat Ramp in Maryland, River Creek on the Virginia side. She confirmed that Montgomery County had units on the scene and a helicopter in the air.

The LCFR Dispatcher asked the MC-ECC Call Taker if any units from LCFR were needed and was placed on hold. The MC-ECC Call Taker came back on the line and asked if Loudoun knew where to go; the LCFR Dispatcher said no and asked for an address. The MC-ECC Call Taker advised it was a code [cardiac arrest] pulled out on the Virginia side at Goose Creek and the mouth of the Potomac. The MC-ECC Call Taker provided the address as 18552 Bernido Bay. The LCFR-ECC Dispatcher identified the street as Perdido Bay Terrace, which LCFR-ECC staff used to load the call into CAD.

- LCFR-ECC called the MC-ECC police non-emergency line. This line is answered by the same Call Takers that answer 9-1-1 calls, who may do not have operational awareness of active search and rescue incidents. The MCFRS direct line to the MC-ECC fire/rescue dispatchers/operators would have enabled the LCFR-ECC staff to directly contact the MC-ECC personnel directly involved in the MCFRS response units.
- Written statements from LCFR-ECC staff indicate that the Perdido Bay address was the closest valid address they could identify to the area described by MC-ECC.

At 18:15:12, MC-ECC called LCFR-ECC and advised the address to be 18552 Bernido Bay. The LCFR Dispatcher attempted to load the location into CAD, but determined that street does not exist in Loudoun's CAD system. The LCFR Dispatcher confirmed that another LCFR Dispatcher had loaded the incident and inquired what response was required; MC-ECC advised that since the victim was already out of the water, a cardiac arrest response would likely be correct.

Loudoun County's CAD incident for 18552 Perdido Bay Terrace was created at 18:15:55 and units were dispatched at 18:16:08. The initial LCFR response complement included: A622 (Ambulance), E622B (Engine), M613E (Medic Unit), M613B (Medic Unit), and EMS601 (EMS Supervisor). Due to the nature of the incident, a cloned call was created for LCSO. A cloned call is an incident type that requires both LCFR and LCSO resources.

18:16:02 – BT731 [MCFRS resource] arrived at Edward's Ferry Boat Ramp.

At 18:16:20, LCFR-ECC received a 9-1-1 call and the caller stated that, "**we have someone, we were just here, on the phone with them, and someone's drowning here in River Creek.**" The LCFR Call Taker advised that help is dispatched – to which the caller responds that "**there is nobody here and there hasn't been anybody here for 10 minutes.**" The caller repeats the location as Confluence Park, all the way in the back of the gated community of River Creek. The LCFR Call Taker asked if it is near Perdido Bay, but the caller stated "**I don't know where that is.**"

The caller advised "**they have him out of the water, they're doing CPR and chest compressions on the phone with another, another medical person.**" The LCFR Call Taker asked if the caller could send someone to the road to meet the incoming units and the caller responded that they had already done so. The LCFR Call Taker asked if the caller knows who the victim is and she replied "**his name is Fitz.**"

At 18:17:57 LCFR-ECC received a 9-1-1 call from a caller confirming the location at Perdido Bay Terrace; the Dispatcher asked him to send someone to the road to meet incoming units.

At 18:18:45 MC-ECC called LCFR-ECC asking for an ETA on Loudoun's units. The LCFR Call Taker advised that Loudoun had multiple units en route but did not have an ETA. MC-ECC asked if MCFRS needed to send the boats across the water; the LCFR Dispatcher advised "**no, I don't think so.**"

At 18:19:08 MC-ECC called LCFR-ECC asking for an ETA on Loudoun's units to determine if MCFRS needed to launch their boats. The LCFR Dispatcher said that a Loudoun medic unit provided their ETA as a "**couple minutes.**"

18:20:32 – BC601 (Battalion Chief) added to the call

18:20:40 – BT731 [MCFRS resource] preparing to launch

At 18:20:44 MC-ECC conferenced a 9-1-1 call to Loudoun for a drowning victim on the shore by the river. The male caller initially said he didn't have an address and then said Confluence Park, River Creek Country Club, Ninth tee box. A female caller then takes over

and provides multiple addresses, including 43813 Bent Creek Terrace. The LCFR Call Taker repeatedly assured the caller that LCFR had dispatched resources and help was on the way. The LCFR Call Taker disconnected when the caller heard the ambulance's sirens on Perdido Bay Terrace.

At 18:23:46 MC-ECC called LCFR-ECC to confirm that units were responding to Perdido Bay Terrace. The LCFR Call Taker advised that units had just arrived on the scene.

At approximately 18:24, BC705 contacted LCFR-ECC via radio on talk group 6DELTA advising MCFRS was launching a boat from their side and he would remain on Loudoun County's radio channel.

18:24:23 – First LCSO deputy on scene

18:24:46 – BT731 reported “**motor trouble**” and requested assistance getting back to shore.

18:24:57 – M613B on scene. The Officer-in-Charge advised incoming units on 6DELTA they would need to drive off-road to access the patient.

18:25:15 – A622 on scene

18:26:02 – M613E on scene

At 18:26:23, an MC-ECC Call Taker called LCFR-ECC asking about a callback number for one of the original 9-1-1 callers.

18:28:57 – all MCFRS boats out of the water

18:32:20 – BC601 on scene. After arriving on the scene, BC601 confirmed the incident to be a working code that would be handled by resources on the scene; any units from Montgomery County could go in service. BC705 acknowledged this transmission, replying that all MCFRS units were out of the water and would be clearing the radio channel.

18:32:22 – EMS601 on scene

At 18:35:14, LCFR-ECC called MC-ECC to advise that any Montgomery County units responding to the incident could go in service, per BC601.

18:43:12 – E622B on scene

## FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

This section identifies findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and specific recommendations to improve 9-1-1 call processing for incidents in and along the Potomac River where it borders Loudoun County.

The Team determined that several major factors lead up to and affected the sequence of events during this incident, to include:

- Policies/Procedures
- 9-1-1 Call Transfers
- Staffing
- Training

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY

**Policies/Procedures:** The Potomac River is located in the State of Maryland, and Montgomery County has jurisdiction for both law enforcement and fire/rescue incidents on the river. As such, MCFRS boat resources are strategically located for response to the Potomac River.

On June 4, the MC-ECC had multiple policies that addressed incidents and operations on the Potomac River, including: 24-01 Incident Response Policy-Appendix M “Water Rescue Incidents,” ECC Section Directive 18-17 Dispatch of Water Rescue Resources, SOP 316 Potomac River Level, SOP 404 Incident Intake and Generation, Information Bulletin 17-01 SW412 and SW412B, and the Potomac River and C and O Canal Quick Reference Guide. Some of these policies have since been updated. MCPD has its own training, call taking, and dispatching policies which specifically address the Potomac River.

The initial 9-1-1 caller stated that, **“we’re at River Creek, the club in the back, we’re like all swimming in the river. We had a friend swimming and he’s under the water but we like literally can’t find him.”**

Based on this information and in accordance with established MC-ECC policies, the MC-ECC Call Taker processed the location of the incident as the Potomac River, with the caller located on the Virginia side. MCFRS resources were dispatched within three minutes of the first 9-1-1 call.

**9-1-1 Call Exchanges:** As noted, Montgomery County is primarily responsible for fire/rescue response for the Potomac River. Accordingly, it is critical that MC-ECC get the location and nature of the emergency as quickly as practicable. Given the information provided by the 9-1-1 callers, calls received by LCFR-ECC were repeatedly conferenced to MC-ECC. In turn, MC-ECC Call Takers conferenced callers with LCFR-ECC when the callers stated they were in Loudoun/Leesburg area. Ultimately, 9-1-1 calls were repeatedly conferenced between the two jurisdictions and staff from both centers called one another multiple times.

**Staffing Levels:** On the day of the incident, The MC-ECC was at its prescribed staffing level.

**Training:** Telecommunicators responded to the caller providing information in a manner that is consistent with MC-ECC training.

## **LOUDOUN COUNTY**

**Policies/Procedures:** On June 4, 2020, the LCFR-ECC relied on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan (MAOP) and established Loudoun County dispatch algorithms to send resources to incidents in/around waterways, including the Potomac River. As noted earlier, a provision of the MAOP is that *no jurisdiction/agency shall send assistance unless requested by the authority having jurisdiction.*

LCFR staff are trained to transfer calls to the PSAP that has jurisdiction when receiving calls that originate from outside Loudoun County. Written statements provided by LCFR-ECC staff indicate that they have been taught for many years that incidents occurring in the Potomac River should be transferred to Montgomery County since the river is in their jurisdiction.

LCFR-ECC personnel relied on years of training and practice that MCFRS would address river rescue incidents without requesting assistance from mutual aid jurisdictions on the opposite shore, even if the incident originated in Virginia. Further, the LCFR-ECC did not create an incident in Loudoun County because Montgomery County did not specifically request mutual aid resources.

Further, since Montgomery County was handling the call, LCFR-ECC staff did not initially utilize all the geo-verification methods (e.g. RapidSOS) available to enter a location for an emergency incident in the Motorola PremierOne CAD System.

While there is no question that the Potomac River is legally owned by the state of Maryland, strict adherence to jurisdictional boundaries may not provide the fastest, most efficient response to 9-1-1 callers reporting an emergency.

**9-1-1 Call Exchanges:** Given the information provided by the 9-1-1 callers, calls received by LCFR-ECC were repeatedly transferred to MC-ECC. In turn, MC-ECC Call Takers conferenced callers with LCFR-ECC when the callers stated they were in Loudoun/Leesburg area. Ultimately, 9-1-1 calls were repeatedly conferenced between the two jurisdictions and staff from both centers called one another multiple times. This caused confusion in both centers and frustration for the 9-1-1 callers.

**Staffing Levels (LCFR-ECC):** On the day of the incident, the on-duty LCFR-ECC supervisor was training a new employee. As a result, the supervisor was not able to fully engage and maintain situational awareness of the information being received specific to this incident. The three remaining employees answered the 9-1-1 phones, business lines, and monitoring multiple radio channels simultaneously.

**Training:** Communications personnel did not listen as effectively as they should have when 9-1-1 callers pointed out that fire/rescue units were on the wrong side of the Potomac. Staff were pre-disposed to defer jurisdiction to Montgomery County because of that County's general authority over the Potomac River. However, had a policy been in place that provided LCFR-ECC staff the authority to send resources to an incident even when response may be the responsibility of another jurisdiction, some of the delay in dispatching Loudoun County resources might have been avoided.

## **JOINT LOUDOUN COUNTY AND MONTGOMERY COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMPLETED ACTIONS**

The following actions have been implemented since June 4:

### ***1. A first-responder will be sent on all Potomac River incidents.***

The intent of this recommendation is to get public safety personnel on both shores to a water incident quickly to provide real-time intelligence to other responding units, or to provide immediate medical care to the patient if needed. This will also allow public safety personnel to quickly contact the 911 caller and relay any updated information quickly and efficiently. A first responder is defined as an EMS unit, or a fire suppression unit, such as an engine, truck or rescue squad.

MC-ECC implemented this recommendation on June 19, 2020. MC-ECC issued a Directive that requires the dispatch of a first responder to the Virginia shore for incidents involving the Potomac River. On August 12, 2020 this directive was updated to include all incidents with a victim(s) in the river, regardless from which shore they entered (Appendix F).

LCFR-ECC implemented this recommendation on June 8, 2020. The new LCFR-ECC policy requires that LCFR assets be dispatched to any incident along Loudoun County's adjoining waterways, regardless of jurisdictional responsibility, including the Potomac River (Appendix C).

### ***2. Montgomery County ECC will be conferenced in all Potomac River Incidents after a location and callback phone number have been obtained.***

As the authority having jurisdiction, MCFRS boat resources have been strategically placed for response to the Potomac River. Therefore, it is imperative that calls involving the Potomac River received by Virginia jurisdictions are given to MC-ECC as soon as practical. If the LCFR-ECC receives a 9-1-1 call for a Potomac River incident, the call taker/dispatcher should obtain a location and a callback phone number for the calling party, and then conference in MC-ECC. This conferencing process is intended to reduce the number of repetitive questions that the calling party must answer and to ensure that both ECCs are receiving the same information as quickly and efficiently as possible. This will improve situational awareness among the ECCs and provide for a common operating picture among the responding field units. Both jurisdictions' ECC personnel should stay on the line until a complete picture of the event is developed.



As of July 17, 2020, MC-ECC and LCFR-ECC agreed that if Loudoun County receives a call for a Potomac River incident, LCFR-ECC will get a location and the caller's phone number, and then conference in MC-ECC (Appendix D).

**3. Questions about specific fire/rescue incidents must be directed to MCFRS personnel at the MC-ECC.**

If the LCFR-ECC has questions about a specific fire/rescue incident involving MCFRS resources, they should call the MCFRS ECC Administrative line. The MCFRS ECC Administrative line goes directly to MCFRS personnel working on the Operations Floor of the MC-ECC. These are the personnel that will have the most current operational information and are able to communicate directly with the responding field units.

As of July 16, 2020. LCFR-ECC has updated the contact information for MC-ECC.

**4. Refer the current Potomac River Rescue, Assistance, and Emergency Incident Response Plan (Appendix G) back to the MWCOG Senior Operations Chiefs Committee and Technical Rescue Subcommittee for revision to include the dispatch and response updates as proposed by the Fire Chiefs from Loudoun and Fairfax Counties to the Chairman of the MWCOG Fire Chiefs Committee on June 23, 2020 (Appendix H).**

Montgomery County has been the primary agency to respond to incident involving the Potomac River. Other jurisdictions have grown their water assets in recent years where they may be utilized if their qualified boats are closer than a MCFRS boat. The use of CAD2CAD technology allows for mutual aid dispatches of appropriate resources based on their actual location, rather than by jurisdictional boundaries.

This referral was made on June 23, 2020. The Operations Chiefs from MCFRS and LCFR, as well as Fairfax VA and Frederick MD, are currently in discussion about Potomac River responses.

## **LOUDOUN COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMPLETED ACTIONS**

***Recommendation – Given the dynamic nature of emergency incidents along the Potomac River, it is imperative that both Loudoun and Montgomery Counties work cooperatively with others in the region who receive 9-1-1 calls for incidents in or along the Potomac River to develop a comprehensive, cohesive policy that addresses the following:***

- ***Procedures for processing 9-1-1 calls, including conferencing in other jurisdictions to avoid unnecessary call transfers.***
- ***Standardized water rescue response complements that include assets from both sides of the river.***
- ***Standardized radio channels for river incidents to ensure that operational personnel are able to communicate across jurisdictions, along the length or the river.***

***Recommendation – Develop a comprehensive Potomac River Atlas that includes points of interest, islands, boat ramps, and vehicle access on both sides of the river, ranging from Chain Bridge (connects Washington D.C. to Virginia) Northwest to Hancock, Maryland. This resource is currently in development by the LCFR Special Operations Division and will be made available to all jurisdictions that are part of mutual aid agreements for Potomac River response with Loudoun County.***

***Recommendation – Develop partnerships with public and private groups in Loudoun County to improve public awareness of river safety and location identification in case of emergencies. LCFR has initiated a partnership with a local foundation to install signage that provides warnings and geographical location references at popular recreational swimming locations throughout the county. Over ten signs are currently on order.***

### **When in Doubt, Send Resources**

Over the course of the Incident, both communications centers received multiple 9-1-1 calls from the scene providing numerous address points, commonplace names (which were known to the callers but not the County CAD/GIS systems), street names, and geographical references. Exacerbating the confusion, the 9-1-1 calls originated from multiple callers and were handled by multiple, different Call Takers in both centers.

On at least two occasions, MC-ECC personnel specifically told Loudoun that Montgomery was handling the incident since resources had been dispatched to the river, despite the conflicting information received from the 9-1-1 callers and clear geographical references to Loudoun County. While Confluence Park was not a commonplace name in either jurisdiction's CAD system, for the 9-1-1 calls that came directly to the LCFR-ECC, personnel could have used other tools, like Rapid SOS, or Enhanced 911 Wireless Services Phase I (location of originating cell tower) or Phase 2 (latitude and longitude) caller location tools or Google or Google Maps earlier in the incident, to help identify the callers' location in a more timely manner.

***Recommendation – Conduct a County-wide review of commonplace names to ensure their entry into the CAD system is updated and maintained. As of July 24, 2020, 240 commonplace names have been added to the CAD system, including Confluence Park.***

Finally, as noted above, the training and experience of personnel in both centers guided them to treat incidents along the Potomac as strictly under the purview of Montgomery County.

***Recommendation – Develop policies/procedures that empower communications personnel to send resources to a general area to investigate an incident, particularly in areas along jurisdictional borders when it is unclear exactly where a victim is located. Further, reinforce LCFR-ECC staff's ability to reach out to any of the uniformed command officers on-duty 24 hours/day for guidance or assistance.***

## **ECC Manual**

In reviewing the LCFR-ECC's policies and procedures, the Team needed to gather a multitude of administrative and operational policies, procedures, and guidelines. The LCFR-ECC lacks a single unifying policy and procedure manual that clearly establishes and defines administrative and operational responsibilities for the ECC and its personnel.

***Recommendation – Develop a comprehensive LCFR-ECC Communications Manual which includes policy and standard operating procedures for all aspects of the Center's operations. These authoritative sources will provide direction and guidance for all personnel in the ECC and will undergo an annual review by the ECC management and LCFR Command staff to ensure that the manuals remain current and inclusive of all relevant information addressing ECC operations. Topics in the manuals should include but not be limited to:***

- ***Basic Call Taker/Dispatcher Training Curriculum***
- ***County Familiarization***
- ***Regular Updates to Commonplace names in CAD***
- ***Mutual Aid Response Protocols***
- ***Potomac River Response***
- ***Assignment of Radio Frequencies for Emergency Incidents***
- ***Procedures and Methods for Identification of Incident Location***
- ***Staffing***
- ***Quality Assurance Program and Procedures*** – includes an assessment of the adherence to industry performance standards and best practices on a recurring basis. This program should review the instances of event type changes, application of EMD and EFD as well as high-risk/low frequency call reviews.

## **INTER-JURISDICTIONAL COMMUNICATION**

9-1-1 callers were repeatedly transferred or conferenced between the two jurisdictions. Transferred 9-1-1 calls lose critical location data in the transfer process. This information is less important when callers are reporting a fixed emergency, such as a house on fire or an auto accident at a specific intersection. However, victims in the River are generally moving and/or are not entirely clear on their location. Most callers do not know the address of their location unless they are at a familiar place (home/work) so often they rely on commonplace names to give their location. CAD is limited to only commonplace names that have been reported to the agency. While Confluence Park may be a popular commonplace in the River Creek community, as privately owned property there is currently no requirement that this information be provided to Loudoun County for inclusion in the County's GIS system.

When calls are transferred to Loudoun they are received on administrative lines. Therefore, no Automatic Number Identification (ANI) or Automatic Location Information (ALI) is received as it would be on a 9-1-1 trunk line. This means that personnel must rely on either the transferring jurisdiction to provide the caller's number and location (address, road intersection or latitude/longitude) or the 9-1-1 caller.

As such, where multiple jurisdictions will be responding to an incident on the River, it is more prudent to conference another jurisdiction into the call rather than simply transfer it.

***Recommendation – When multiple jurisdictions will be responding along the Potomac River, those jurisdictions should be conferenced into the 9-1-1 call so that the original receiving center can still use a phone’s location information to pinpoint the caller. It is imperative that this occurs as quickly as possible to ensure that resources are dispatched in an expedient fashion from both sides of the River.***

***Recommendation – For all incidents involving multi-jurisdictional response in or along the Potomac River, the manager (or designee) of the originating ECC should be required to initiate a review and summary of the communications between ECCs and dispatch of resources to the incident by the jurisdictions involved. This summary should be shared with the respective ECC leadership, Operations and Communications Chiefs. These summaries should be completed until such time that the multi-jurisdictional policies have been tested and refined through emergency responses and there is sufficient evidence that the system and policy is producing the desired results.***

## **STAFFING**

The LCFR-ECC was staffed with five personnel on June 4, 2020 however one of the employees was a trainee, assigned to the Assistant Dispatch Supervisor. Subsequently the Assistant Dispatch Supervisor could not provide full time and attention to the supervisory role. This undermined the supervisor’s ability to maintain overall situational awareness during this event. Further, this meant the Assistant Supervisor and trainee were two people answering one phone line while the other three Dispatchers answered all other incoming lines and maintained radio communications with field units on three different radio channels (6ALPHA, 6BRAVO, and 6DELTA).

***Recommendation – When serving as the Supervisor, personnel should not be responsible for direct oversight of a trainee. Optimally, the supervisor should be monitoring the actions of each of the various call-takers and dispatchers, making sure each team member is performing his/her duties in a satisfactory manner, and be familiar with the overall operational picture. The practice of a supervisor conducting basic training with a trainee concurrent with call-taking and dispatch supervisory responsibilities has been discontinued in the LCFR-ECC.***

The four shifts in the LCFR-ECC are not staffed with the same number of full time employees (“FTEs”) and due to vacancies and extended leave, minimum staffing of four to five employees has often been the norm. Having an additional person in the Center would remove the Supervisor from the regular assignment rotation, allowing him/her to focus on overseeing staff and maintaining situational awareness of the County-wide operational environment.

***Recommendation – Add three Call Taker/Dispatchers to the center in order to ensure each shift is staffed with a like number of FTEs.***

***Recommendation – Develop a relief pool of Call Takers and/or Dispatchers by cross-training uniformed members to serve in these positions when off duty from field operations.***

The MC-ECC uses uniformed fire/rescue employees as dispatchers and supervisors within their center. All of the employees in the LCFR-ECC are civilians. The assignment of uniformed employees to the Communications Center provides an invaluable resource who can provide support during complex incidents and assist in sorting confusing or conflicting information. Peer jurisdictions in the NCR operate with a uniformed fire/EMS officer position in their respective ECCs. The position is typically at the Captain level and possesses the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience to direct staff on emergency incidents. This officer will bring, on average, 8-10 years of field experience to the ECC to support and guide the call taker/dispatchers in the center. These officers can also reach out to their peers in other centers to help coordinate operations across jurisdictions.

***Recommendation – Implement a Uniformed Fire Officer (“UFO”) program in the ECC. The UFO is a uniformed supervisor that is primarily responsible for providing technical guidance and advice to the ECC personnel. This includes authority to ensure a prompt response to emergency incidents and assure adequate deployment of resources. The UFO would also be responsible for monitoring the deployment of department resources, ensuring adequate emergency vehicle coverage throughout the county, and keeping department staff informed of significant incidents or events. As the liaison between LC-CFRS administrative and operational members and ECC staff, the UFO’s performance is crucial to a seamless dispatch operation.***

## **TRAINING**

***Recommendation – Implement regular refresher training on all current and future methods of loading CAD incident locations, to include Enhanced 911 Phase 1 and 2, RapidSOS, Automatic Location Information (ALI) imported from the 9-1-1 phone system, manual entry of numerical addresses, manually entry of the intersection of two roadways, manually entry of a “commonplace” name, manual entry of a Mile Marker, Mile Post, or Exit, via Enhanced 911 Phase 1 and 2 latitude and longitude imported from the 9-1-1 phone system. These can be manually inputted or “dropped” onto the map.***

***Recommendation – Implement training that focuses on both effective and empathetic listening in the Emergency Communications Center to help personnel obtain more accurate information from 9-1-1 callers. The objective of this training is to develop a servant leadership philosophy by call takers and dispatchers handling 9-1-1 calls in the LCFR-ECC.***

Personnel in Loudoun County receive a general overview of the County’s geography during their initial training. However, the County has grown tremendously over the past 10 years and new development is constant. Ongoing area familiarization, including field ride alongs, would help provide communications personnel with a better working knowledge of the County.

***Recommendation – Increase the LCFR-ECC basic training curriculum to include 16 hours of familiarization with County geography, with field ride alongs. Require ongoing training of incumbent employees to keep up with development and growth.***

LCFR-ECC supervisory personnel are selected through a competitive process for promotion and are required to possess requisite Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) certification for eligibility to compete for promotion. More rigorous training would ensure that supervisors are fully versed on their roles and responsibilities in the Center.

***Recommendation – Implement an initial supervisory development program/curriculum for LCFR-ECC Dispatch Supervisors and Assistant Dispatch Supervisors. Additionally, ECC supervisors should be required to recertify to keep their APCO certifications current.***

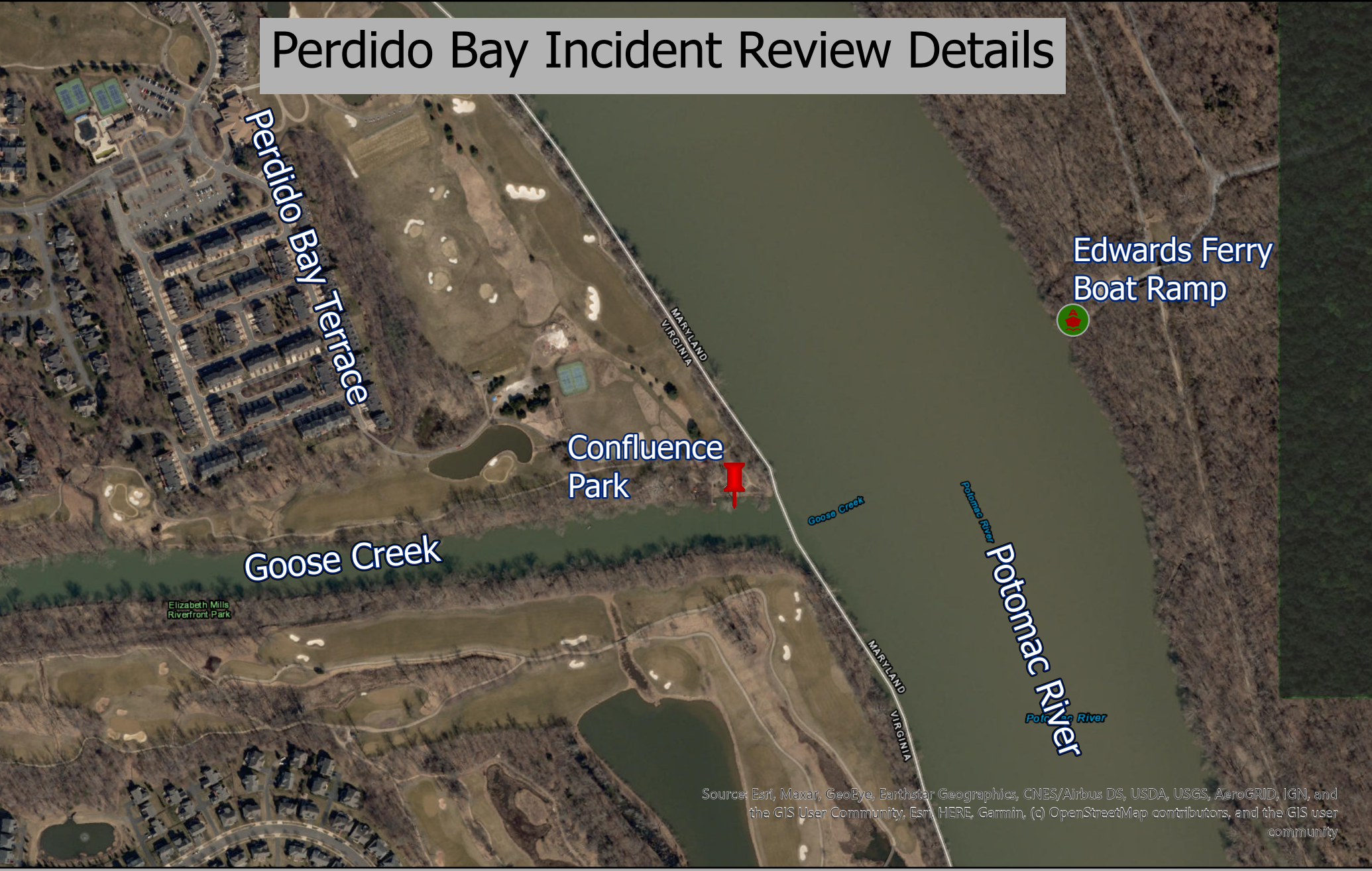
LCFR-ECC personnel start their shifts at either 0700 or 1900 hours. They generally have a quick conversation with the employee they are relieving, but otherwise, there is no consistent pass-on or briefing. Having a defined shift meeting at the beginning of every shift would provide uninterrupted time to pass on relevant information, conduct training, and otherwise ensure that personnel are up-to-date on events in the Department/Center.

***Recommendation – Implement mandatory shift briefings by the supervisor at the start of each ECC shift. These briefings should be at least 30 minutes in length and should include pass on information, review of new or existing policy or procedures, incident case reviews, opportunity for staff to raise concerns or issues that need attention, updates from field operations.***

## **APPENDICES**

- A. Map of Confluence Park
- B. Overview Map of Area
- C. Loudoun County ECC General Order 2020-004
- D. Loudoun County ECC General Order 2020-005
- E. Incident Response Policy Appendix M (Initial Actions for Water Rescue Incidents)
- F. Montgomery County ECC Directive 20-05
- G. Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Potomac River Rescue, Assistance, and Emergency Incident Response Plan, May 2020.
- H. Letter to Chairman of MWCOG Fire Chiefs Committee

# Perdido Bay Incident Review Details

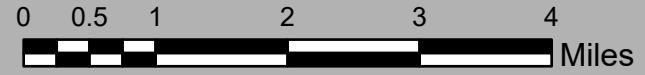


Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community, Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community

## Points of Interest

 Incident Area

Author: LCFR  
Date: 7/22/2020



Spatial Reference  
Name: NAD 1983 HARN State Plane Virginia North FIPS 4501 Feet  
PCS: NAD 1983 HARN State Plane Virginia North FIPS 4501 Feet





# Perdido Bay Incident Review Overview



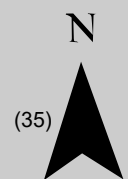
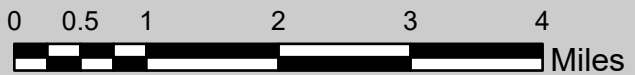
Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

## Points of Interest

-  Hospital
-  Incident Area
-  Fire Station

Author: LCFR  
Date: 7/22/2020

Spatial Reference  
Name: NAD 1983 HARN State Plane Virginia North FIPS 4501 Feet  
PCS: NAD 1983 HARN State Plane Virginia North FIPS 4501 Feet



**Loudoun County Department of Fire and Rescue  
Communications & Support Services  
DIVISION GENERAL ORDER**

Title: **Incidents in or around the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers**

GO #: **2020-004**

Issued: June 8, 2020

Expires: **Until Rescinded**

Revised: **July 10, 2020**

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ *Nicole H. Pickrell*

Nicole H. Pickrell, Deputy Chief

**PURPOSE**

To ensure adequate resources are dispatched to water rescue incidents reported to be in or around the Potomac River, Shenandoah River, and/or their tributaries.

**SCOPE**

This General Order applies to Communications personnel employed by Loudoun County Fire and Rescue.

**POLICY**

Effective this date, ECC personnel will dispatch appropriate Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System (LC-CFRS) resources to any incidents reported to the Loudoun County ECC that are in or along the Potomac River, Shenandoah River and/or their tributaries. Any questions or concerns regarding the dispatch of resources shall be directed to the on-duty Operations Shift Commander by the ECC Supervisor or Assistant Shift Supervisor.

**PROCEDURE**

1. For any incident in or along the Potomac River or Shenandoah River, where a victim is reported to be IN the water, ECC personnel shall:
  - a. Build an incident using the closest known address and dispatch resources for a Potomac River Response (POT), as recommended by CAD.
  - b. Notify the appropriate mutual aid jurisdiction (e.g., Montgomery County, Frederick County, Washington County or Jefferson County) and advise them to dispatch the appropriate complement of resources from their side of the river.
  
2. For any incident along the Potomac River or Shenandoah River in Loudoun County, where a victim is reported to be OUT of the water on the Virginia shore, ECC personal shall:
  - a. Build an incident using the closest known address and dispatch the appropriate complement, depending on the patient's status (e.g., drowning, etc.).

If the victim's location cannot be confirmed to be on the Virginia shore, contact the appropriate mutual aid jurisdiction and advise them to dispatch the appropriate complement of resources from their side of the river.

3. For any other water rescue incident in Loudoun County, including those along river tributaries such as Goose Creek, Broad Run, Bull Run, etc. or in standing/flood waters, ECC personal shall build an incident using the closest known address and dispatch resources appropriate to the situation, as outlined in COMM GO 2020-007, drowning, etc.

**Loudoun County Department of Fire and Rescue  
Communications & Support Services  
DIVISION GENERAL ORDER**

Title: **Transferring 9-1-1 Calls to Other Jurisdictions**

GO #: **2020-005**

Issued: **June 30, 2020**

Expires: **N/A**

Revised: **July 17, 2020**

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ *Nicole H. Pickrell*

Nicole H. Pickrell, Deputy Chief

**BACKGROUND**

When transferring 9-1-1 calls to another jurisdiction, the ANI/ALI information may not transfer, which could adversely impact that jurisdiction’s ability to locate the 9-1-1 caller.

**PURPOSE**

To ensure the consistent transfer of emergency call detail information to other jurisdictions.

**SCOPE**

This General Order applies to Communications personnel employed by Loudoun County Fire and Rescue.

**POLICY/PROCEDURE**

- A. Upon receiving an emergency call for service that is determined to be in another jurisdiction (except those for the Leesburg Police Department), and Loudoun County **IS NOT** dispatching units to the call, ECC staff shall do the following:
  - 1. Immediately transfer the call to the appropriate jurisdiction
  - 2. Identify yourself as “Loudoun County with a transfer...”
  - 3. Stay on the line with the caller and the jurisdiction until a valid location has been identified.
  - 4. Once a valid location has been identified, announce that “Loudoun County is disconnecting.”
  
- B. Upon receiving an emergency call for service that is determined to be in another jurisdiction (except LPD), and Loudoun County **IS** dispatching units to the call, ECC staff shall do the following:
  - 1. Immediately transfer the call to the appropriate jurisdiction
  - 2. Identify yourself as “Loudoun County conferencing a caller AND Loudoun County is dispatching units to the location...”

- a. Provide the general location of the caller (e.g., Algonkian Park boat ramp), general location of the victim (if different) and the nature of the emergency (e.g., missing kayaker, etc.). By providing as much information as possible to the conferenced jurisdiction, the goal is to avoid having the 9-1-1 caller interrogated twice.
3. Stay on the line with the caller and the jurisdiction to ensure a valid location is identified.



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

24-01

**Policy and Procedure**

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**Incident Response Policy Appendix M  
Initial Actions for Water Rescue Incidents**

January 1, 2019

Issued by: Fire Chief Scott E. Goldstein

Policy Number: 24-01

Authority: Montgomery County Code Section 21-3 (b)

Supersedes: *Information Bulletin 07-10, Enhanced Water Rescue Capacity, 05,17,2007*

Effective Date: January 1, 2019

**SECTION 1. Purpose:**

To provide direction for first responding personnel during water rescue or ice rescue incidents.

**SECTION 2. Applicability:**

This appendix is applicable to all MCFRS personnel and personnel from other organizations operating on incidents in Montgomery County.

**SECTION 3. Background:**

This appendix describes the MCFRS operational approach to water rescue incidents for personnel certified by MCFRS to the Water Rescue Operations level. It is drawn from the experience of our personnel, lessons learned from similar events in Montgomery County, and from national best practices.

This appendix **is not** a standard operational guideline for water rescue technicians, nor does it prescribe how members of the Swift Water Rescue Team (SWRT) will operate on water related incidents.

The intent of this appendix is to:

- a. Provide personnel with a general framework for approaching water related incidents;
- b. Provide a framework for a risk/benefit analysis;
- c. Encourage personnel to decisively execute removal of people from hazards when it is within their certification to do so and when the risk analysis supports it; and
- d. Reduce the timeframe from when SWRT assets arrive and when they enter the water to execute the rescue.



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

24-01

**Policy and Procedure**

Page 2 of 10

**Incident Response Policy Appendix M  
Initial Actions for Water Rescue Incidents**

January 1, 2019

**Position Statement**

Water related incidents can be roughly divided into three basic types: swift water, flat water, and ice rescue.

In very general terms swift water is water that moves faster than an average person can comfortably walk, and flat water is moving more slowly than the average person can comfortably walk. Ice refers to any ice formation regardless of quality or strength and regardless of whether it is over swift or flat water.

It is extremely hazardous for personnel to operate outside the scope and certification of their training.

Awareness-level training has typically been provided in classes such as Practical Rescue or Rescue Technician Site Operations.

Operations-level certification is generally recognized as being currently certified as MCFRS Boat Crew or Boat Operator.

Technician-level certification is only recognized as being currently certified as a MCFRS Swift Water Rescue Team (SWRT) Boat Crew or SWRT Boat Operator.

Personnel must remember that these incidents are high risk and low frequency and will place initial responders under unusual stress. There may also be significant pressure from bystanders to “do something.” However, it is imperative that the victim(s) or the crowd don’t dictate the terms of the rescue; the actions and tempo of the rescue must be result of a rational risk-based approach.

MCFRS operations are based on action, and this appendix encourages action but action with restraint. Rescuers must take the time to evaluate the situation, to control as many hazards as possible, and to reduce risk. There are a variety of situations that can result in people requiring assistance from fire/rescue to get out of whatever situation that they are in. It is not possible to provide specific guidance on each event type; however, some events are more common than others and this appendix is designed to address the more common occurrences.

**Common Occurrences**

There are three common occurrences that form the basis for this appendix:

1. Urban street flooding. During urban street flooding rainfall exceeds the discharge capacity of the storm water management system leading to water in the roadways. This type of flooding



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

24-01

**Policy and Procedure**

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**Incident Response Policy Appendix M  
Initial Actions for Water Rescue Incidents**

January 1, 2019

tends to cause rapid rises in water level but equally important the water recedes quickly as well.

2. Creek flooding. Excessive rainfall leads to creeks overflowing their banks and flowing rapidly downstream.
3. Flat water emergencies. These situations occur when users of the Potomac River upstream of the Seneca Breaks, or other bodies of flat water such as the Triadelphia Reservoir, Lake Needwood, and Lake Frank, either fall into the water or are stranded on disabled watercraft.

Rescues on the Potomac River downstream of Seneca Breaks are managed by SWRT and are not addressed in this document.

### **General Approach**

The general approach to each of the water rescue types follows the same basic framework and all actions for water related incidents must be based on clear objectives and an ongoing risk analysis. In other words, there must be a good reason for placing personnel at greater than usual risk AND the risk assessment must provide a reasonable chance for mission success.

There are four objectives common to all water rescue events. Personnel must consider these objectives as a starting point and adjust them as the situation demands. They are based on the **ACRE** mnemonic:

- a. **Assess:** Assess the scene, determine the most appropriate travel routes and staging areas, identify hazards and conduct a risk analysis.
- b. **Control:** Control hazards, isolate and deny entry, identify hazards, establish isolation zones. This includes taking the necessary steps, such as establishing spotters, and downstream safety to speed the intervention of the SWRT.
- c. **Rescue:** Use appropriate methods and equipment to separate people from hazards.
- d. **Evacuate:** Remove victim(s) to safety.

### **Water Hazards**

- a. The Potomac River below the Seneca Breaks (near Riley's Lock) is one of the most dangerous and difficult to navigate stretches of river in the country. People travel from all over the country to practice kayaking in this stretch of water precisely because of the inherent difficulty.





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- b. The relative dangers of the Potomac River as subject to change and the water level of the river plays a large role in either reducing or increasing risk.
- c. Personnel must be constantly aware of the fact that floodwaters tend to rise quickly and, in many cases, subside just as quickly. This means that people in danger one moment may not be in any danger the next moment. Conversely a simple stream can turn into raging current in a matter of seconds with little or no warning.
- d. Manholes can be missing. Water moving over manholes can dislodge the covers, leaving large open voids.
- e. Roads can be washed away. Water can undermine large sections of roadway.
- f. Water has pressure. The effect of the pressure depends on how fast the water is moving and the surface area available for the water to act on.
- g. Ice is unpredictable. It is difficult for seasoned experts to make determinations about how ice is going to behave under load. This difficulty is enhanced when the ice has formed over moving water. These rescues require specialized training and equipment. Further, attempts at rescuing victim(s) may increase the danger for the victim(s) and increase the difficulty of the rescue.
- h. Ice rescue requires high levels of stamina. Movement across the ice is difficult. Just making it to the rescue site is physically exhausting.

**Risk Assessment**

Water related incidents are among the riskiest for fire and rescue personnel. There are multiple characteristics of water related incidents that increase risk:

- a. Water calls can be emotionally charged, personnel must resist the urge to rush.
- b. Many hazards are hidden under the surface of the water.
- c. Water exerts a tremendous amount of pressure. Even shallow water moving at speed can knock personnel off their feet.

These hazards demand that personnel slow down their action sequence and ensure that if they do choose to enter the water that choice is the result of a deliberate risk assessment and that there is a reasonable chance that the objectives can be met. A risk assessment for water rescue incidents must consider:

- a. The certification level of available personnel;
- b. The relative danger that the victim(s) are in;
- c. The specific circumstances of the situation;



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- d. What hazards are obvious and potential hazards;
- e. The time lag between when first responders arrive and when specialized resources arrive; and
- f. The scene stability, e.g., is the situation getting better or worse over time (water line is receding, rising, or stable).

**Risk Reduction**

To reduce risk to the lowest achievable level the following risk mitigation methods are established:

- a. Establishment of an Incident Commander;
- b. When possible during flooding situations, encourage stranded people to stay in place, especially if the water is receding;
- c. Marking the water line in a way that the marker will not wash or float away and can be monitored from a safe distance;
- d. Establishment of a downstream safety;
- e. Establishment of an upstream spotter;
- f. Development and communication of incident objectives; and
- g. Establishment of a safety plan.

**SECTION 4. Definitions:**

See Appendix Q.

**SECTION 5. Policy:**

- a. Personnel must not perform tasks above their level of training.
- b. Swift Water Hot Zone activities are only to be conducted by SWRT members.
- c. Personnel must ensure that all their actions support the established objectives.
- d. Non-SWRT personnel are not permitted to connect or tie their personal floatation device (PFD) to a rope unless they are operating on ice.
- e. Personnel must not wear any part of their structural firefighting gear within 10' of the water's edge with the sole exception of ice rescue where the Incident Commander has the discretion to allow turnout coats in the Warm Zone for ice rescue if needed for protection from the elements.



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- f. For operations on the Potomac River, non-SWRT personnel may only work in the Hot Zone upstream of the Seneca Breaks at Riley's Lock and only when water levels are:
  - 1. Less than 5.5' at Point of Rocks for the Potomac River from the Frederick County line to Edwards Ferry
  - 2. Less than 8.0' on the Edwards Ferry gauge for the Potomac River from Edwards Ferry to the Seneca Breaks
- g. During flooding situations,
  - 1. Encourage stranded people to stay in place, especially if the water is receding.
  - 2. Mark the edge of the water using means that will not wash off or wash away.
  - 3. Ensure the water level is monitored continuously.
- h. The minimum water rescue personal protective equipment (PPE) in the Hot Zone is:
  - 1. A properly sized floatation device;
  - 2. An approved helmet for water rescue;
  - 3. A whistle; and
  - 4. Dry suits when
    - A. The combined air/water temperature is below 120 degrees F.
    - B. There is a reasonable concern that the water may be contaminated with by sewage, excessive runoff, or other hazards.
- i. The Incident Commander may increase the PPE level as necessary based on the risk assessment.
- j. The water is the Hot Zone.
- k. The Warm Zone begins at the water's edge and extends to a minimum of 10' away from the water's edge.
  - 1. There are circumstances such as terrain, weather, or other conditions that increase the risk of personnel inadvertently entering the water, and such circumstances may require the Warm Zone to be expanded beyond the 10' minimum.
  - 2. All personnel in the Warm Zone must:
    - A. Wear at least a PFD.
    - B. Have a throw bag (if available).
    - C. Be free of all structural firefighter gear.
- l. When a boat-based rescue is likely, and properly trained personnel are available prior to the arrival of the boat personnel or SWRT, the following positions should be staffed, in order of priority:



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1. Downstream Safety
  2. Downstream Safety on opposite bank
  3. Upstream Spotters
- m. Downstream Safety and Upstream Spotters are only used when they have a reasonable chance of impacting the overall safety of the mission. For example, when operations are occurring beyond the reach of throw bags, it may be no longer prudent to assign downstream safety.
- n. Downstream Safety and Upstream Spotters will operate in teams of at least two personnel wearing at least PFDs and equipped with radios and throw bags. The Downstream Safety personnel should be prepared for the rescue of victims and/or rescuers that may be swept downstream. All personnel in this group should have throw bags in hand.
- o. Shallow Water Crossing: A shallow water crossing is where personnel enter water less than 18 inches deep on foot to make a rescue.
- p. Personnel may make a shallow water crossing when:
1. They meet the minimum requirement of boat crew;
  2. The water is not more than 18 inches in depth; and
  3. They use a Shallow Water Crossing Pole.
- q. Boat Based Rescue: Personnel may initiate boat-based rescue when:
1. They meet the minimum requirement of boat crew (Operations level for flat water, SWBC level for swift water);
  2. There is at least one boat operator on board; and
  3. A safety plan is in place.
- r. All victims should be placed in a PFD before being moved.
- s. Only the SWRT may operate on ice that is in or above moving water.
- t. Personnel who entered flood waters should to be decontaminated with a solution of mild detergent and water.
- u. The Fire Chief has the discretion to publish and update checklist(s) to be used on water related incidents.
- v. When a checklist exists for an incident, unit officer must use the checklist for incident operations.
- w. Only the SWRT may engage in any water or ice rescue of animals.
- x. **Initial Actions**



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1. The first arriving Primary Unit Officer will provide the Initial On-Scene report (IOSR).
2. The first arriving Primary Unit Officer will then:
  - A. Assess the entire scene.
  - B. Gather information about the circumstances of the event, preferably from direct witnesses.
  - C. Provide a Situation Update Report (SUR) containing the information gathered during the scene assessment:
    - i. **Location.** Update and/or confirm location of incident and
    - ii. **Conditions.** Type of technical rescue involved, a description of the situation, the number of people in danger, description of hazards found
    - iii. **Actions.** What actions you have already taken, and which do you intend to take.
    - iv. **Needs.** Announcement of what resources will be needed to execute the rescue.
    - v. The SUR report contains the command choice (Tactical or Stationary).

**SECTION 6. Responsibility:**

Personnel are responsible for knowing their current certification level and not acting in a capacity that exceeds their current certification.

**SECTION 7. Procedure:**

- a. The first arriving Primary Unit Officer must:
  1. **[Provide an IOSR].**
  2. Assess the scene.
  3. **[Provide a SUR].**
  4. **[Announce best access for additional units].**
  5. **[Announce staging location for units].**
  6. Communicate the incident objectives.
  7. Ensure the water line is marked.
  8. Use the Water Rescue Checklist.
- b. Determine if there is a rescue involved and the level of certification required to conduct the rescue.



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- c. Assign the following positions as necessary and prudent.
  - 1. Downstream safety
  - 2. Downstream safety on opposite bank
  - 3. Upstream spotters
- d. Begin the rescue sequence
  - 1. **Yell:** Establish and maintain contact with the victim(s). When possible, the person making contact should provide instructions for self-evacuation. Consider the use of a bull horn or apparatus PA system.
  - 2. **Reach:** Use available tools and equipment to reach out to the victim and pull them to safety.
  - 3. **Throw:** Use the issued throw bags or other available means to throw a rope to the victims and pull them to safety.
- e. Personnel certified as boat crew may extend the rescue sequence on **Flat Water** to:
  - 1. **Row:** Rescue and evacuate the victims to safety using a boat.
  - 2. **Go:** Bodily enter the water to rescue the victim(s).
- f. After rescue operations are deemed unnecessary or have been completed:
  - 1. Ensure stranded vehicles are clearly marked with high visibility caution tape whenever it is safe to do so.
  - 2. If the incident involves a boat, other watercraft, or car, the make and color should be recorded and passed on to ECC.
  - 3. The Incident Commander must coordinate with the appropriate agency to deny access to flooded roadways or other hazardous areas.
  - 4. The Incident Commander must ensure that personnel and equipment are decontaminated as necessary.

**SECTION 8. Cancellation:**

Information Bulletin 07-10, Enhanced Water Rescue Capability, 05/17/2007



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**SECTION 9. Attachments:**

A. Water Rescue Checklist

**Approved:**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Gold".

Fire Chief

January 1, 2019

Date



# Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service Emergency Communications Center

## Section Directive

Directive: 20-05

June 19, 2020

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TO: All Personnel Assigned or Detailed to the ECC

FROM: Assistant Chief Edward Radcliffe

Subject: Mutual Aid First Responders on Potomac River Incidents

Montgomery County has operational jurisdiction for any incident involving the Potomac River. In most cases, when there is a report of a Potomac River incident and the 911 call is routed outside of Montgomery County, those calls are transferred to the Montgomery County ECC for dispatch.

Once dispatched, if the nature of the incident is someone went in or jumped in from the shoreline or close proximity to the shoreline of the neighboring jurisdiction, the ECC supervisor will be responsible for contacting the respective jurisdiction's Emergency Communications Center and request a first responder be sent to the last known location of the victim. A first responder should be at a minimum an EMS transport unit.

The first responders will be used to collect additional information from bystanders and witnesses, and to provide EMS support if the victim is located before a Montgomery County resource arrives at that location. They are not expected to enter the water.

If the jurisdiction advises they are sending more than a first responder including water rescue boats, do not refuse their response. Ensure they are added to the incident and operating on our assigned tactical talkgroup. If a jurisdiction is sending water rescue resources that were not requested, verbally advise the responding command officer.





Metropolitan Washington  
Council of Governments

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# **Potomac River Rescue, Assistance, and Emergency Incident Response Plan**

**Approved by the COG Fire Chiefs Committee  
Metropolitan Washington  
Council of Governments**

May 2020

# COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

## PURPOSE

An emergency occurring on the Potomac River presents a host of unique rescue, assistance, and coordination challenges. The water environment presents a threat to those in and around the river to include; life safety hazards, the terrain adjacent to the river limits accessibility, and hazardous material exposure and environmental conditions intensify in the maritime environment. These challenges are exacerbated by limited resources in a multi-jurisdictional environment, resulting in a need for seamless interoperability in every response.

Because of these unique circumstances, public safety agencies with jurisdiction on the Potomac River, its tributaries, or adjacent lands, signatory of the *Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) Mutual Aide Operations Plan (MAOP)* agree to respond in a coordinated manner as outlined in this response plan.

## SAFETY FIRST

The Potomac River is a hazardous force that deserves one's constant respect. Each year, three to six drownings and several boating emergencies take place. When incidents happen, local, state, and federal agencies must act swiftly and efficiently to mitigate life-threatening circumstances and protect property.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): All responders shall be equipped with personal flotation and appropriate protective equipment to limit exposure to cold, heat, and weather-related injuries. Agencies are encouraged to develop a standard for hypothermia protective gear. When the human body is submerged in water, heat is lost approximately 26 times faster than it is on dry land, making hypothermia one of the greatest dangers to a person who enters the water.

## DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS

Outfitting regional organizations with the right equipment and dispatching resources based on capabilities is paramount to ensuring a resilient region and effective responses. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), United States Coast Guard (USCG), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Operational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and other accreditation providing organizations define standards with which all response agencies should comply. The definitions section of this this document, provided in Enclosure (1) identify a small selection of those standards which are referenced throughout this text, but agency administrators are reminded to reference the national and regional standards when designing their response capabilities.



# COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

Existing Plans and Agreements: There are several existing plans and agreements that influence the way response agencies interoperate on the Potomac River. Because most of the existing plans and agreements not specifically developed for the maritime environment, this plan serves to link the existing documents and specify where maritime responses require unique procedures. Where applicable, these references will be noted and *italicized*.

## RESPONSIBILITY AND JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction over the Potomac River is held concurrently by the United States Coast Guard for the entire length of the river; by the State of Maryland for the river upstream and downstream of the District of Columbia; and by the Commonwealth of Virginia for waters contained inside point-to-point Virginia shorelines.

For the purposes of rescue, assistance, and emergency response, these boundaries do not limit responders; rather indicate the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), which is accountable for ensuring prudent action is taken to resolve the incident.

Geographical Division: The Potomac River is over 400 miles long, and the fourth largest river along the Atlantic coast of the United States. COG extends partnerships through approximately 103 miles of this waterway including the boundary line between the Upper and Lower Potomac, which are fundamentally different geographical areas.

- Lower Potomac: The tidal (navigable) or Lower Potomac lies below Little Falls as the head of navigation and extends to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. For the purposes of this plan, and in accordance with the *U.S. Coast Pilot vol.3 - 51<sup>st</sup> edition, 2018*, the Chain Bridge, 1/2 mile downstream of Little Falls, at approximately Mile 101 on the Potomac River is the head of tidewater navigation, and is the delineation between the Upper and Lower Potomac. In this plan, the Lower Potomac refers only to those waters within the reaches of the COG region, and will therefore extend to the Rt. 301, Governor Harry Nice Bridge at ~Mile 44.
- Upper Potomac: The non-tidal (non-navigable) portion of the Potomac River, typically known as the Upper Potomac extends north from the Chain Bridge at ~Mile 101 to the confluence of the northern and southern branches of the Potomac River in Green Spring, WV. For the purposes of this plan, the Upper Potomac refers only to those waters within the reaches of the COG region, and will therefore extend to the Rt. 15 Point of Rocks Bridge, which connects Frederick County, MD to Loudoun County, VA at approximately Mile 147 of the Potomac River.

### NOTE

Responses on the Lower and Upper Potomac are fundamentally different. This plan will specify where an agreement, policy, or method differs.



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

- Jurisdictional Resources: The District of Columbia (DC) Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Harbor Patrol, DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS), and the USCG maintain fully staffed and dedicated boat crews for immediate vessel response 24/7/365. However, many jurisdictions maintain single assets and varying levels of staffing/availability. A listing of assets and response postures on the Lower Potomac River is provided in Enclosure (2) to assist in response planning.

### INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

Because the river serves as a jurisdictional boundary and each jurisdiction has varying level of response capabilities, each response on the Potomac River requires multi-agency coordination. Use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) will help provide a systematic response process to the federal, state, local, non-governmental, and commercial entities/agencies who share response authorities and responsibilities on the Potomac River.

Approximately 80% of responses share common principles, which is the ICS structure most personnel are familiar with as published in the *National Capital Region (NCR) ICS Handbook*. The modular nature of ICS allows for the 20% difference to be tailored to unique situations such as search and rescue, recovery, salvage, firefighting, pollution response, and mass casualty in a maritime environment. Incident Commanders (IC) should also be aware that these activities often lead to investigations, enforcement, and other longer-term initiatives and should therefore take care to preserve the scene.

Command and Control: Command of an incident is determined by several factors including Jurisdiction, Capability, and situational awareness. Marine Officers and crews are trained, experienced, and capable of handling most minor incidents and coordinating the initial response for a significant response. **In this agreement, we authorize the first capable responder on-scene, which qualifies as an operations boat, regardless of jurisdiction, to assume initial Incident Commander (IC).**

- Transferring Command: It is important to note, however, that the initial IC could be easily and quickly overwhelmed and must be prepared to transfer command when appropriate. Upon relinquishing command, the initial IC is typically well suited to serve as the Marine Operations Division Supervisor.
  - Considerations for an appropriate IC include:
    - **General:** Jurisdiction, vantage point/height of eye, communications, internet/mobile data terminal, etc.
    - **Vessels:** Stability of the platform, adequate staffing to handle own vessel's navigation and command duties.
    - **Land Based:** Familiarity with navigational area and understanding of available Maritime Resources.



# COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

## RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

Incident Commander: The first boat to arrive on-scene, which meets the qualifications of an Operations Boat, regardless of jurisdiction, assumes Command. The initial IC will typically handle the entire incident but when an incident is not resolved immediately, a command structure must be implemented.

The IC is responsible for the overall management of the incident to include determination of the incident objectives, establishing the priorities, and establishing an appropriate ICS organization and Incident Command Post (ICP).

- Incident Command Post: The ICP of a maritime incident should be at a location accessible by maritime response assets.
  - Considerations for an appropriate ICP include:
    - Proximity to Incident
    - Access to Waterway via Boat Launch, Marina, Sea Wall, etc.
- Unified Command (UC): Upon establishment of an ICP, all agencies with jurisdiction should be invited to join the Unified Command (UC) and all participating agencies invited to send a representative to enhance interoperability.

### NOTE

A listing of adequate maritime incident ICP and Staging areas is provided in Enclosure (3) to assist the IC in response planning.

## Maritime Incident Standard Objectives/Priorities

While the objectives of an incident will vary, the priorities generally involve safety, assisting victims, controlling the incident, and conservation of property. The IC should consider the following priorities when responding to a maritime incident.

- Protection and Safety of all Personnel: Implement operational risk management principles and only take necessary risks. The loss of life is never acceptable. Where the probability of saving a life exists, damage to rescue equipment is acceptable, and where that probability diminishes into a possibility, less risk is acceptable. When conducting recovery operations or rescuing property, no moderate or high level of risk is acceptable.
- Prompt removal and treatment of injured and endangered victims: Where all victims can be recovered promptly every effort should be made to quickly transfer the victims to Emergency Medical Services (EMS) units for treatment. When the



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

arriving Search and Rescue Units (SRU) do not immediately resolve the report of distress they must begin to follow Search and Rescue procedures.

- Control and containment of the incident: When needed, the IC should direct capable SRUs to provide a safety zone around the incident to protect rescue personnel from traffic and to protect citizens from the hazards contained within the incident. When the incident involves a sunken vessel, fire, or mass casualty there is often a need for pollution or hazardous material response.
- Conservation of property: All capable response assets are authorized to perform rescue operations which aim to prevent the loss or damage of property. However, operations for the sole purpose of salvage or recovery should only be performed when the activity involves saving a life, prevention of environmental damage, or to remove hazards to navigation. Belonging to a public agency includes a responsibility to minimize the possibility of competition or interference with commercial enterprise, therefore salvage and routine towing operations should be contracted by the responsible party (RP) through an appropriate service provider.

Expanding Incidents: Each incident type discussed in this plan present a unique design for command and control. Most incidents will classify as a Type 5 or Type 4 event with a simple response structure. However, in the event of a Type 3, Type 2, or Type 1 incident it may be necessary to expand command, control, and communications.

- Incident Type Characteristics (from least –type 5 – to most – type 1 – complex):
  - Type 5: The incident can be handled with one or two single resources with up to six personnel. Command and General Staff positions (other than the Incident Commander) are not activated. Incident is contained within the first operational period and no written Incident Action Plan is required.
  - Type 4: Command and General Staff function are activated (only if needed). Several Single resources are required to mitigate incident. Limited to one operational period in the control phase. No written Incident Plan is required for non-HazMat incidents. A documented operational briefing in completed.
  - Type 3: When capabilities exceed initial response, the appropriate ICS positions should be added to match the complexity of the incident. Some or all of the Command and General Staff positions may be activated, as well as Division or Group Supervisor and/or Unit Leader level positions. An Incident Management Team (IMT) or incident command organization manages initial action incidents with a significant number of resources, and an extended response incident until containment/control is achieved. The



# COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

incident may extend into multiple operational periods and a written Incident Action Plan may be required for each operational period.

- Type 2: Regional and/or national resources are required to safely and effectively manage the operations. Most or all Command and General Staff positions are filled. Operations personnel typically do not exceed 200 per operational period and the total does not exceed 500. The agency administrator/official is responsible for the incident complexity analysis, agency administrator briefings, and written delegation of authority. The incident is expected to go into multiple operational periods. A written Incident Action Plan is required for each operational period.
- Type 1: National resources are required to safely and effectively manage the operations. All Command and General Staff positions are activated, and Branches need to be established. Operations personnel often exceed 500 per operational period and total personnel will usually exceed 1,000. There is a high impact on the local jurisdiction, requiring additional staff for office administrative and support functions. The incident may result in a disaster declaration. The incident is expected to go into multiple operational periods. A written Incident Action Plan is required for each operational period.
- Span of Control: The type of incident, nature of the task, hazards and safety factors and distances between personnel and resources all influence span of control considerations. NIMS suggests that effective span of control on incidents may vary from three to seven, with five being optimal. Each section below will address specific ICS suggestions for expanding incidents.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The most critical aspect of an effective response is communications. Beginning with the collection of initial reports, notification of all available and capable resources, and finally communications among those resources.

### NOTE

Notification and Dispatch procedures for maritime incidents are under development through the COG PSAP working group. Specific capabilities, technology, and procedures will be expanded upon in Appendix A of this plan.

**Initial reports** should be collected as quickly and completely as possible with a focus on collecting five critical pieces of information displayed in **Figure 1** which are imperative to sizing up the incident and dispatching the correct resources to the correct location.

<b>1. Location/ Position of Emergency</b>	[ ] Lat/Long	[ ] Geographic Reference
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## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

<b>2. Number of Persons On Board</b>	Adults:	Children:	Total:
<b>3. Nature of Emergency:</b>	(are any people in the water?)		
<b>4. Description of Vessel</b>	Name:	Length:	
	Make/Type:	Color:	
<b>5. Have all persons on board the vessel put on Personal Flotation Devices / adequate number of PFD's available? Y / N</b>			

**Figure 1**

**Notifications** to maritime emergency responders must be prompt and comprehensive. It is imperative that all applicable jurisdictions, utilizing all available means are notified.

- U.S. Coast Guard Notification is critical during any maritime emergency. In addition to holding many Federal Authorities with civil responsibilities, the USCG's sole mission is to protect the users of the waterway, defend against threats delivered by the waterway, and protect the waterway itself. Upon notification of the USCG, the following notifications/communications will occur:
  - Emergency Broadcasts are issued to the public and response agencies via VHF-FM CH16.
    - **Urgent Marine Information Broadcast (UMIB)** notifies the public of an emergency, in which they may be in the vicinity of, and able to assist immediately or provide critical information to authorities.
    - **Safety Marine Information Broadcast (SMIB)** notifies the public of a danger, in which they may be near, and advises them to stay clear.
    - **Marine Assistance Request Broadcast (MARB)** notifies the public of a mariner in need of non-emergency assistance, in which they may be able to provide to prevent an emergency from developing.
  - Direction Finding (DF) on VHF-FM 16: In the tidal or Lower Potomac VHF-FM 16 is the primary hailing and distress frequency for vessel-to-vessel communication and the U.S. Coast Guard. These transmissions are monitored and recorded 24 hours /day with direction finding (DF) capabilities through the Rescue 21 (R-21) Nationwide Network.
  - SAROPS: Search and Rescue Optimal Planning System (SAROPS) is a Monte Carlo-based software system used by the Coast Guard for maritime search planning. SAROPS uses thousands of simulated particles generated by user inputs in a graphical user interface. SAROPS was designed to





## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

effectively use higher resolution gridded environmental data to provide superior accuracy in search object drift.

- Computer program used to assist on-scene search and rescue assets by directing them to areas maximizing probability of success in locating victims.
  - Able to generate search pattern summaries and search effectiveness reports.
  - Can be initiated by USCG-NCR at the request of the Incident Commander or On-scene-coordinator.
- 
- Public Safety Access Point (PSAP) Notification and Dispatch procedures serve as the most commonly leveraged method of notification and dispatch on the Potomac River. It is imperative that the PSAP strive to ascertain the nearest capable response assets available for dispatch. To facilitate this:
    - A list of existing maritime resources and their response posture is included in Enclosure (2). U.S. Coast Guard Station Washington shall update and distribute this list annually to all agencies and PSAPs.
    - All agencies will provide updated capabilities and availability postures annually to [Stationwashington@uscg.mil](mailto:Stationwashington@uscg.mil) when requested.
    - Charles County has developed an integrated Geographic Information System (GIS) layer and will update and distribute annually to all NCR PSAPs. GIS layer available here: <https://arcg.is/04frvb>.
    - All PSAPs will upload GIS layers into their Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and incorporate this product into their dispatch procedures.
    - If a natural CAD relationship between organizations does not exist, PSAPs will set automatic notifications through CAD Email.
    - Any notification method not listed but deemed to be useful and effective should be utilized.

### NOTE

Notification and Dispatch procedures for maritime incidents are under development through the COG PSAP working group. Specific capabilities, technology, and procedures will be expanded upon in Appendix A of this plan.



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

For the purpose of this document the following terms are defined:

- Zone – The grouping of talkgroups or channels within a subscriber radio.
- Talkgroup – Virtual radio channels created for and used by trunked radio systems.
- Channel – A dedicated radio frequency.

The **Interoperability NCR Maritime Interoperability Zone** is designed to group maritime tactical talkgroups and VHF-FM channels from multiple jurisdictions into a single radio zone to provide consistent and reliable interoperability in the maritime domain.

Applicability: Use of this zone applies to signatories of the *Greater Metropolitan Area Inter-Jurisdictional Mutual Aid Communications Memorandum of Understanding* who hold authority or assist with responses on the Upper and Lower Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. The primary hosts for talkgroups within this zone typically hold jurisdiction on these rivers and conduct responses with maritime-based command and control. Where superseding communications plans exist and/or land-based responses utilize vessels but all

command and control resides on land and an interoperability solution is not otherwise required, usage of these talkgroups may or may not apply.

Maritime Based Incidents – Are primarily going to occur in the navigable waters of the lower Potomac and Anacostia rivers. These are responses where waterborne assets are the primary responders because the incident is not accessible from land.

Land-based incidents – Are primarily going to occur in non-navigable waters. These are responses where waterborne assets are typically all launched from the shoreline and are merely utilized as a strike team or taskforce, such as a Swiftwater rescue incident or incidents where waterborne are assisting land based companies with water supply and fire suppression of land accessible structures.

### NOTE

\*\*Navigable waters are defined as waters which are accessible only by boat and as that are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide, as described in 33 CFR 329.4

Channel Assignment: The PSAP shall assign the applicable NCR Maritime talkgroup to all resources dispatched/responding to a maritime incident. If the AHJ PSAP is unable to operate on the designated Maritime talkgroup, the AHJ's shared talkgroup may be utilized as a command channel to communicate with the Incident Commander who will monitor both the AHJ's command talkgroup and the Maritime talkgroup.



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

- Geographical Applicability: Incident channels shall correspond with the geographical applicability listed in **Table 1**, which aligns with natural AHJ boundaries. Incidents, which occur where the AHJ is unclear, and/or which drift into neighboring jurisdictions, will begin on the channel assigned by the dispatching PSAP and shift only as directed by the Incident Commander.

**NOTE**

Host Jurisdictions who conduct responses in waters where no talk group is provided are encouraged to make agreements for responses into waters not covered in this plan.

Talkgroup and Channel Selection: The following channel lineup shall be placed into a single radio zone and should be published in the *NCR Communications Interoperability Group (CIG) Fleet Map* and programmed in all subscriber radios within the NCR.

NCR Maritime Interoperability Zone			
ASSIGNMENT	TALKGROUP	PRIMARY USE	GEOGRAPHICAL APPLICABILITY
Ch 1/A	FFX 42L MAR	Maritime Hailing	Lower Potomac
Ch 2/B	FFX 42M MAR	Maritime Operations	FFC Waters
Ch 3/C	CH10A 12MAR A	Maritime Operations	CC Waters
Ch 4/D	CH10A 13MAR B	Maritime Operations	
Ch 5/E	PWC 51J	Maritime Operations	PWC Waters
Ch 6/F	PWC 51K	Maritime Operations	
Ch 7/G	PG Marine 1	Maritime Operations	PGC Waters
Ch 8/H	PG Marine 2E*	Encrypted Maritime Operations	Lower Potomac
Ch 9/I	7 Marine 1	Maritime Operations	MC/Upper Potomac
Ch 10/J	7 Marine 2E	Maritime Operations	
Ch 11/K	DC MIC 1 MAIN	Maritime Operations	DC Waters
Ch 12/L	DC MIC 2 OPS1	Maritime Operations	
Ch 13/M	DC MIC 3 OPS2	Maritime Operations	
Ch 14/N	DC MIC 4(E*)	Maritime Operations and Encrypted NSSE Events	
Ch 15/O	AHJ CHOICE-or-VHF81A- - or DC MIC 5E *	MIC 5E Encrypted Maritime Operations and NSSE Events	DC Waters or Local Use



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

Ch 16/P	AHJ CHOICE-or-VHF16*	International Hailing & Distress	Lower Potomac
*Encrypted and VHF talkgroups are not available in all subscribers' radios. These assignments may be changed by individual jurisdictions based on current capabilities.			

**Table 1**

**Talkgroup Usage:** Each jurisdiction has provided at least two (2) talkgroups for maritime operational use. The first talkgroup is the primary response talkgroup for that agency's jurisdiction. The subsequent talkgroups are available for additional incidents or separation of command and operations.

**Hailing:** The first channel in the NCR Maritime Zone is FFX 42L which is designated as the Maritime Hailing channel for the Lower Potomac. All response assets on routine patrol shall monitor FFX 42L unless otherwise assigned/engaged. FFX 42L shall be utilized to hail and coordinate with nearby response assets prior to the assignment of an incident channel.

**NOTE**

VHF-FM Ch16 remains the International Hailing and Distress Frequency, however, the range of FFX 42L greatly exceeds the line of site of VHF-FM and can alert assets on patrol in neighboring jurisdictions

**Expanding Incident Communications:** Expanding incidents may require additional talkgroups assignments from the NCR Maritime Zone. The IC will determine the need for additional talkgroup or channel assignments and shift responders as necessary.

- **DC MIC Channels:** The DC Maritime Incident Channels (MIC) (pronounced "mikes") are the primary public safety communications talkgroups for maritime and aviation assets, along with supporting ground units, for incidents occurring within the navigable jurisdictional waters of DC. DC MIC 1 is intended to create a Maritime Domain Awareness Net for the waters surrounding the Nation's Capital by being the primary operations talkgroup for all maritime operations in DC waters. DC MIC 1 will be monitored 24/7/365 by DC Fireboat, MPD harbor, MPD Falcon Base, USPP Eagles Nest and USCG Sector NCR Command Center, as well as during the operating hours of USCG Station Washington. Public safety and government vessels and aviation assets from other jurisdictions should use MIC 1 to communicate with DC Fireboat and DC MPD Harbor units when in DC waters.
  - **DC MIC 1 MAIN:** Routine operation, primary incident operations.
  - **DC MIC 2 OPS 1:** Expanded incident operations
  - **DC MIC 3 OPS 2:** Expanded incident operations



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

- DC MIC 4(E\*) Expanded incident operations and Encrypted NSSE patching. This talkgroup will be backwards compatible for non-encrypted users except during NSSE events until a time where it will go encrypted full time.
- DC MIC 5 ENCRPT: Encrypted incident operations and NSSE patching.

DC Fireboat Base will monitor the main interoperability hailing channel FFX42L in quarters and when underway outside of DC jurisdictional waters.

Encryption: Four encrypted talkgroups exist within this zone, the primary talkgroup being PG MARITIME 2E, which is available for use by any jurisdiction in need of an encrypted channel who is in range of the PG communications network. The second encrypted channel is 7 Marine 2E. The third and fourth encrypted talkgroups are DC MIC(4\*) and DC MIC 5E. (Additional agencies can be added for NSSE interoperability by contacting DC's radio managers)

Primary Understanding that the purpose of the NCR Maritime Zone is to migrate public safety maritime communications from Marine VHF-FM channels which are line of sight only and less secure than talkgroups on a public safety trunked radio system. VHF-FM Ch16 is the International Hailing and Distress Frequency and remains the primary boat to boat communications method on the Lower Potomac River. This channel is required by law to be monitored by many commercial vessels and large recreational vessels and is monitored by the U.S. Coast Guard and several local jurisdictions. Subscribers with multi-band capabilities will program this channel into the 16<sup>th</sup> assignment.

- Charles County Emergency Services hosts VHF-FM Ch16 and has the capability to patch a subscriber radio, allowing responders to communicate with mariners in distress, when a VHF-FM radio is not available.

Secondary VHF-FM: In the event VHF-FM Ch16 is overloaded, disabled, or otherwise unavailable to the responders, the secondary VHF-FM Interoperability Channel for the Lower Potomac is VHF-FM Ch81A. This channel is a USCG working frequency and will be made available to all participants within this agreement by MOU.

Monitoring Requirements: It's not possible to monitor all talkgroups/channels at all times. The fully equipped vessel will monitor VHF-FM Ch16, FFX 42L, and their jurisdictional dispatch channel. Upon being dispatched to an incident, the response boat will announce the incident on FFX42L and switch to the incident channel. Vessels without this capability will, at a minimum attempt to monitor VHF-FM Ch16 and their jurisdictional dispatch. Upon being dispatched to an incident, the vessel will switch from dispatch to the incident channel.

*\*Units stationed in DC Waters shall monitor MIC1.*



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

*\*\*If Sector NCR upgrades their capabilities, they will rebroadcast incident alerts on VHF-FM Ch16, FFX 42L, and MIC 1.*

### SEARCH AND RESCUE

A search and rescue (SAR) incident requires seamless coordination and immediate response by every available resource to prevent loss of life. It is imperative that the agency receiving the initial report notifies the USCG and the neighboring/opposite shore jurisdictions to maximize the effectiveness of the response.

The minimum command structure required for every search and rescue incident should include an IC and a SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC).

SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC): U.S. Coast Guard Sector Maryland-NCR is the SMC for the Potomac River and all connected tributaries and can be contacted via VHF-FM channel 16 or via phone at (410) 576-2525. Responsibilities of the SMC include:

- Gather detailed information relating to the distress situation;
- Issue an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast (UMIB);
- Notify stakeholders in the area;
- Coordinate with Marine Operations/On-Scene Coordinator (OSC);
- Use search planning tools to optimize resource utilization (SAROPS);
- Ensure all SAR documentation is completed; and
- Assist with next of kin (NOK) briefings.

Incident Commander (IC) for SAR: The first boat to arrive on-scene, which meets the qualifications of an Operations Boat, regardless of jurisdiction, assumes Command.

- Assume Command: Establish contact with the AHJ via Tactical Communications Plan or otherwise designated channel, SMC via VHF-FM channel 16 and begin to coordinate with assisting jurisdictions.
- Death, body recovery, and NOK notifications:
  - When searching for persons overboard or possible drowning victims, utilize FLIR, cadaver dogs, side scan sonar, and dive teams.

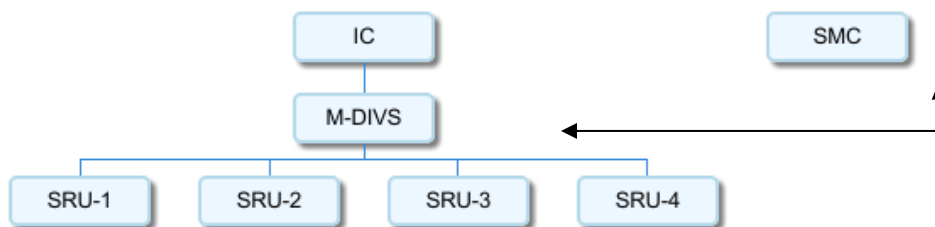


## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

- The AHJ over the scene of a body recovery shall be notified immediately.
- The primary law enforcement agency handling the investigation and the USCG SMC shall coordinate NOK notifications.
- For airline crashes, airline companies are responsible for making NOK Notifications.

Marine Operations Division: The IC will hold these duties in the absence of a Marine Operations Division (M-DIVS). In addition to being a Division Supervisor in the ICS construct, Marine Operations serves as the OSC in the U.S. Maritime SAR System. The most capable Operations Boat (or the initial IC) should serve as Marine Operations and direct SAR Response Units (SRU) in accordance with direction given by the IC and the SMC. Duties and responsibilities include:

- Assume Marine Operations/On Scene Coordinator (OSC): Establish contact with SRUs and SMC via Tactical Communications Plan.
- Deploy Datum to mark position.
- Maintain operational control and coordination of all SAR Response Units (SRU) utilizing assigned on-scene channels.
  - Provide initial brief and search instructions.
  - Obtain search results from SRUs.
- Conduct Accountability checks for all SRUs and report to AHJ and/or IC every 20 minutes or as directed.
- Report overall search results to IC and SMC.
- Brief IC and SMC for concurrence prior to suspension of active search efforts.



SAR Response Unit: All responding vessels shall provide assistance utilizing their unique capabilities and authorities in coordination with the Marine Operations Division.

## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

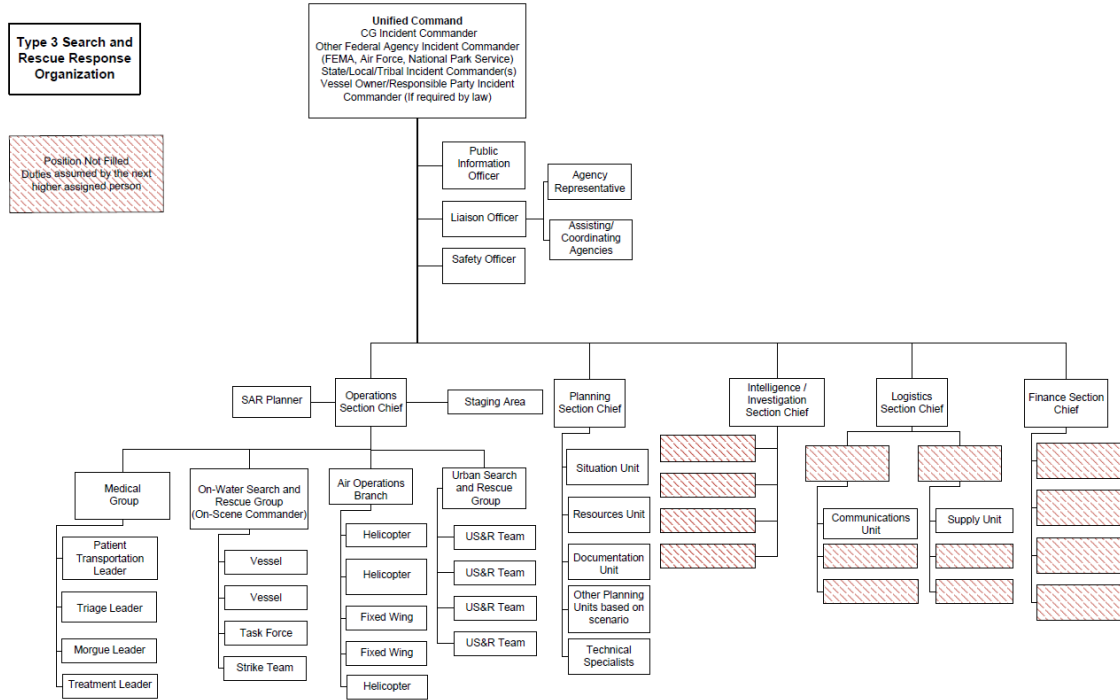
- Investigate and identify all potential targets on the way to the scene.
- Check-in: Every SRU shall check in with Marine Operations.
- Conduct Initial Search or tasking as provided by Marine Operations.
- Report the start, completion, and results of all effort.
- Establish contact with victims/witnesses to collect information:
  - Time this emergency occurred, weather conditions, tides/current and boat traffic at that time, contact information, other witnesses.
  - Confirm location of incident using geographic locations and Latitude/Longitude coordinates if possible.
  - For an overdue boater:
    - Time of departure, route of travel, last port of call, amount of fuel onboard, range of vessel, experience and health conditions.
    - Detailed description of persons and vessels in question including make/model, year, size, color, and registration numbers.
    - Preliminary and Extended Communications (Pre-Comms/Ex-Comms): Interview/investigate marinas and possible port of calls along direct route and all possible routes, witnesses, and/or police departments & conduct a wellness check at the subject's residence.

Expanded Incident: When the IC begins to expand the response construct, some or all of the positions in the following diagram should be considered.





# COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN



## HAZARDOUS MATERIALS OPERATIONS

A hazardous material (HAZMAT) incident requires seamless coordination and immediate response by every available resource to prevent loss of life and minimize environmental damage. It is imperative that the agency receiving the initial report notifies the Coast Guard and the neighboring/ opposite shore jurisdictions to maximize the effectiveness of the response.

The minimum command structure required for every HAZMAT incident should include an IC and an OSC.

On Scene Coordinator: The USCG Sector Maryland-NCR is the OSC for the Potomac River and all connected tributaries and can be contacted via VHF-FM channel 16 or via phone at (410) 576-2525. All instances of pollution or the potential for pollution in a Federal Waterway must be also be reported to the National Response Center (NRC) hotline at 1-800-424-8802.

The USCG along with 16 Federal and 12 local and state agencies throughout Maryland, Virginia, and Washington D.C. have developed a detailed Area Contingency Plan (ACP), which describes the strategy for a coordinated response to any vessels or facilities, which experience:

- Discharge or substantial threat of discharge of oil.
- Release or threat of release of a hazardous substance.



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

- Exposure or threat of exposure to harmful biological substances.
- Exposure to or threat of an exposure to a radiological substance.

Agencies with marine HAZMAT responsibilities should become familiar with the ACP:  
<https://homeport.uscg.mil/my-homeport/contingency-plans/area-contingency-plan?cotpid=1&Source=https://homeport.uscg.mil/port-directory/maryland-ncr>

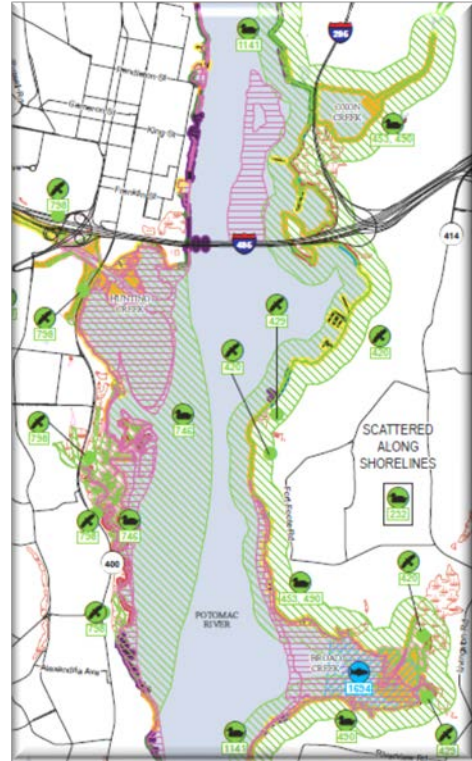
Incident Commander (IC) for HAZMAT: The AHJ over the incident will assign an appropriate IC who will evaluate site conditions, implement response operations, hazard controls, and ensure personal protective equipment (PPE). The IC shall maintain close coordination with the OSC and establish a Unified Command (UC) as early in the incident as possible. The UC should consider the Responsible Party (RP) for inclusion.

- Utilization of Personnel and Assets:
  - Utilize resources in accordance with their Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training level;
  - Law enforcement must immediately restrict access to the area from non-emergency personnel and isolate areas downstream from the public. Consider establishment of a Safety Zone;
  - A decontamination site should be established for patients, responders, and equipment. (i.e. Boats, Boom, PPE, etc.); and
  - Hazardous materials may adversely affect integrity of PPE and inflatable boats. Use of metal boats should be considered over inflatable boats.
- Safety Considerations:
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must include Personal Flotation Devices (PFD); and



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

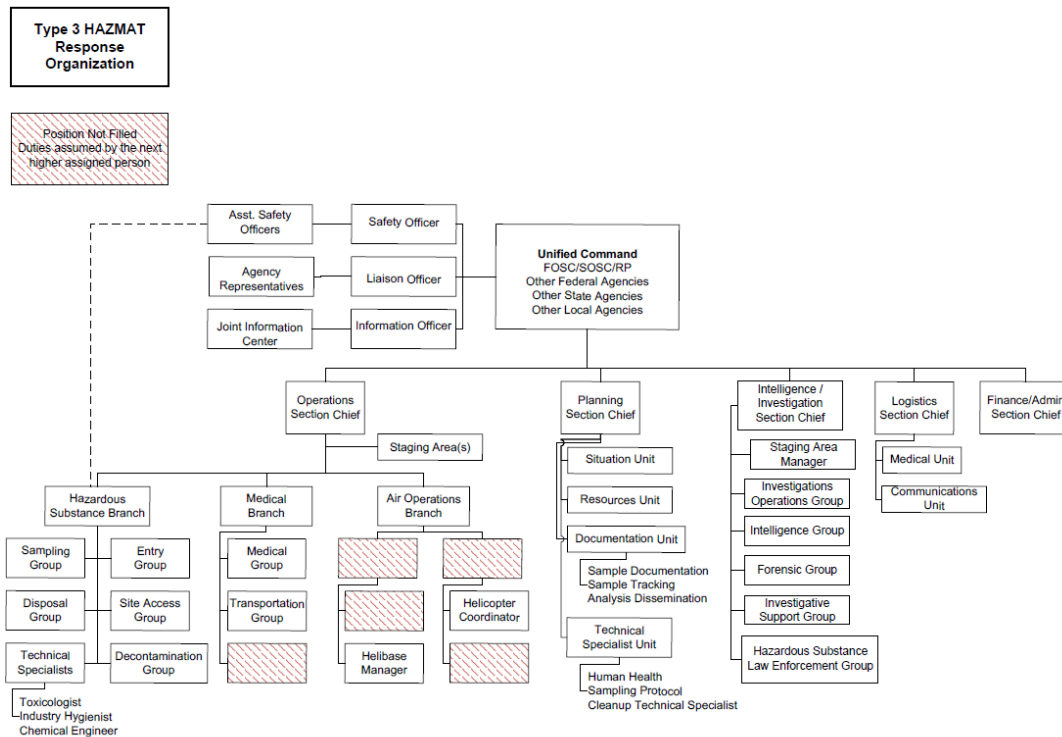
- Boat crews may transport HAZMAT response personnel but shall NOT enter the contaminated zone without appropriate respiratory, dermal, eye, and foot protection to include HAZWOPER PPE levels A, B, C, and D. The maritime environment poses an extreme hazard to encapsulated personnel (Level A). The IC should consider alternative action plans before committing encapsulated personnel to on water operations. Specially trained and equipped teams may be available through coordination with the OSC.
- Environmental Protection:
  - Initial Booming Strategies should aim to protect environmentally sensitive areas, mapped in detail by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Potomac River's analysis is contained in the *Chesapeake Bay & Outer Coast of Maryland and Virginia Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI); Volume 3*: <https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/maps-and-spatial-data/download-esi-maps-and-gis-data.html> Figure (2) provides an example of an ESI map of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and National Harbor; the pink, red, and maroon highlighted shorelines are considered the highest levels of sensitivity.
- Radiological or Nuclear (R/N) detection:
  - In the event of R/N detection during a response, the *NCR Securing the Cities (STC) Operations Plan* should be followed to ensure trained, equipped, and proficient R/N detection responders are utilized and follow detection and response protocols. The following agencies are members of the Maritime NCR Preventative Radiological/Nuclear Detection (PRND) Task Force and are committed to providing resources and trained personnel in support of the STC program.
    - Metro Police Department –Harbor Patrol;
    - DC Fire & Emergency Services;
    - Alexandria Fire Department;
    - Maryland Natural Resources Police;
    - Prince George's County Police;
    - Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority;
    - USCG Station Washington; and



# COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

- USCG Station St. Indigoes.
  - Following initial safety precautions and primary screening, an internal secondary screener from any of the listed agencies can provide isotope identification, make the proper notifications and adjudicate the alarm IAW the *NCR STC Concept of Operations Plan*.
  - The *NCR STC Concept of Operations Plan* and *Information Exchange Plan* is **For Official Use Only (FOUO)** and will not be attached to this document however, the plan (including a maritime annex) is on file at PRND Task Force units and can be provided upon request.
  - Any incident involving suspicious activity, terrorist threats, or actual incidents with a potential or actual terrorist nexus shall be immediately reported to the FBI via the JTTF or directly to regional FBI WMD Coordinator(s). Additionally, any such incident that involves chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear materials, shall be reported to the regional FBI WMD Coordinator(s). The 24-hour telephone number for the FBI's Washington Field Office (WFO) is 202-278-2000.

Expanded Incident: When the IC begins to expand the response construct, some or all of the positions in the following diagram should be considered.



# COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

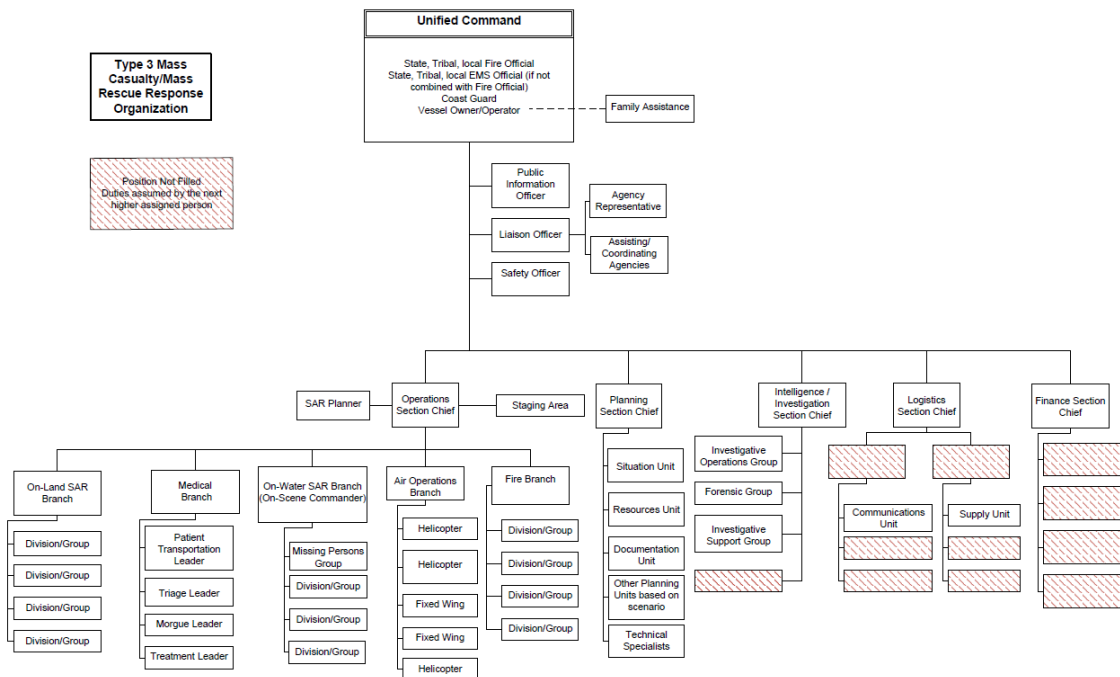
## MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT

A Mass Casualty Incident is defined as an incident which “Severely taxes or overwhelms department resources” and is further defined by Northern Virginia and the *National Capital Region PLAYBOOK, 2017* as “10 or more casualties reported”, while DC FEMS activates a MCI resources when 9 casualties have been reported. There is a potential (MCI) occurring in or near the Potomac River in two separate event types: pre-staged and unforeseen events. The unforeseen events such as train derailment, large or complex HAZMAT/WMD incidents, active shooters or fires on cruise vessels will require an immediate response and dispatching of resources. A pre-staged event such as a National Special Security Event, Marathon, or Marine Event will most likely have units pre-staged and standing by to activate a response.

**NOTE** The NCR does not have a formal Maritime Mass Casualty Plan. This plan is under development will be inserted into this document upon its completion as Appendix (3).

Any MCI requires a unified effort from maritime responders. The *National Capital Region Mass Casualty Response Resources, 2012* lays out patient transportation in detail, however the paper does not make mention of maritime incidents or maritime response resources which further strengthens the need for a maritime mass casualty plan.

Expanded Incident: When the IC begins to expand the response construct, some or all of the positions in the following diagram should be considered.



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

Strong leadership and accountability by officers will be necessary to ensure that untrained rescuers are not placed into dangerous situations due to the stress and confusion that will occur early in such an incident.

- Fatigue must be managed through appropriate work/rest cycles.
- When the possibility of victims and wreckage being in the water exists, boats must establish a forward lookout and proceed with caution.
- During recovery operations, additional rescuers and investigators may be transported by boat for recovery and investigation operations.
- Boat crews shall take all precautions available to ensure the safety of these personnel.
- Operations are likely to be prolonged and require additional PPE; arrangements for additional gear procurement must be made early on.

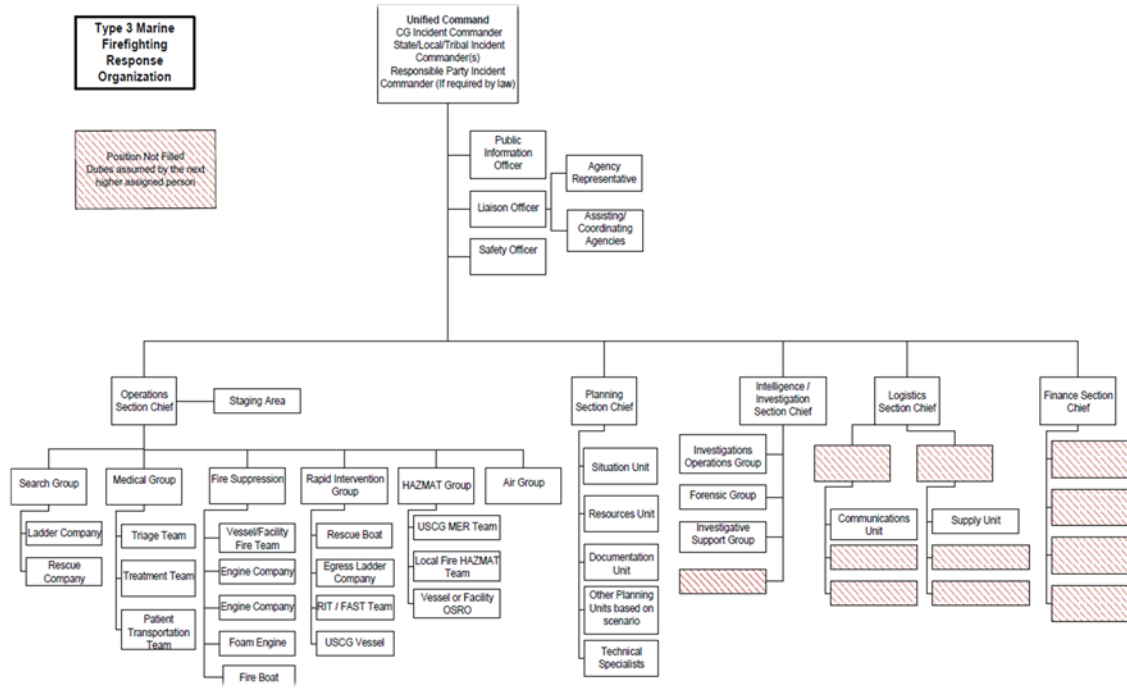
### MARINE FIRE

Special Considerations for a fire: Units with firefighting capability shall be guided by applicable NFPA guidelines. Units without these capabilities shall establish a safety zone for emergency responder actions and civilian boaters, and other incident priorities.

Expanded Incident: When the IC begins to expand the response construct, some or all of the positions in the following diagram should be considered.



# COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN



## EVACUATION PLAN

Every major metropolitan area in the country is faced with the chance of disaster and must identify evacuation options. The Potomac River serves as a maritime highway in and out of the NCR which can assist in performing an evacuation. The *District of Columbia Maritime Evacuation Plan* details the commercial and government cooperation needed during such an emergency. This plan identifies high capacity boats and boat landings which could be leveraged if needed.

ICs who wish to activate this plan should request assistance from the USCG who will coordinate the movement of vessels to and from the designated landings.

An Evacuation is typically coupled with an emergency which is endangering citizens and Incident Commanders should take caution to prevent sending a responder or commercial assistance resource into a contaminated, or dangerous environment.

## SPECIALIZED MARITIME CAPABILITIES

Helicopter Operations: The resource listing provided in **Enclosure 2** outlines agencies with helicopter and aviation assets available to respond to maritime incidents.

- The use of helicopters in the initial search or investigation is valuable in covering a large area quickly, sizing up the scene and providing immediate assistance. Helicopters may be used for:



## COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

- Aerial reconnaissance and search;
  - Transport of patient rescuers and equipment;
  - Back up for rescue boats or providing lighting; and
  - Rescue of victims when they are in immediate danger, or when delayed rescue efforts may affect mortality of the patient.
- Helicopter hoisting operations off a vessel can pose great hazard to the aircrew, boat crew, and to whatever is being hoisted. The safety of helicopter hoist operations is greatly improved if the crew of the vessel is briefed in advance on what is required and when personnel have been properly trained. The following considerations apply:
    - Secure the boat radar and any distracting lighting;
    - Stow all loose gear on vessel and identify snag hazards;
    - Conduct briefing with Helicopter prior to it being directly over-head;
    - Establish course and speed to be maintained during hoisting operation;
    - Establish a dedicated Safety Observer;
    - Don appropriate protective gear such as helmet, goggles, hearing protection, life jacket, etc;
    - Establish emergency break-away procedures (never attach anything to the boat which is also attached to the helicopter); and
    - A helicopter in flight builds up dangerous levels of static electricity; any device lowered from a helicopter must come into contact with the boat, water, or “Deadman’s Stick” before touching it.
  - The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has placed Special Flight Restriction Areas (SFRA) around the NCR, which complicate Aeronautical SAR operations during mass rescues and evacuations. Aviation Commands and Hospitals have developed and documented procedures for coordinating within this airspace in the P-56 Nightingale Plan. The document is Law Enforcement Sensitive and will not be included in any enclosures or annexes of this plan; however, IC’s may utilize the code word “Nightingale” during a mass rescue operation to activate the plan.

Special Purpose Watercraft: Many of the vessels in the area have forward-looking infrared (FLIR) units similar to those on helicopters. The use of shallow draft vessels, airboats, and





## **COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN**

hovercraft can be used in shallow and near shore areas. Additionally, DCFEMS Fireboat John Glenn has ice-breaking capabilities.

### **ATTACHMENTS (Future)**

ENCLOSURE (1)	Definitions
ENCLOSURE (2)	NCR Lower Potomac Resource Listing
ENCLOSURE (3)	ICP and Staging Area Listing
APPENDIX (A)	NCR Maritime Notifications and Dispatch Plan
APPENDIX (C)	NCR Maritime Mass Casualty Plan





## Loudoun County Fire and Rescue

PO Box 7100  
801 Sycolin Road SE, Suite 200  
Leesburg, VA 20177-7100  
Phone 703-777-0333 Fax 703-771-5359



June 22, 2020

Chief Scott Goldstein  
Chairman, Fire Chief Committee  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Dear Chief Goldstein,

As you are aware, on Thursday, June 4, 2020, units from Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service ("MCFRS") and Loudoun County Fire and Rescue ("LCFR") were dispatched to assist with a reported drowning in the River Creek Community near the confluence of the Potomac River and Goose Creek ("the incident"). Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services personnel from Loudoun County arrived to find an unresponsive teenage male with CPR in progress. LCFR personnel immediately assumed patient care and transported to Inova Lansdowne Pediatric ER where the patient was later pronounced deceased.

Due to the incident proximity to both Virginia and Maryland response areas, calls for assistance were received at both Montgomery County and Loudoun County 9-1-1 dispatch centers. Extended efforts to determine the patient's specific location contributed to a delay in dispatching Loudoun first responders. With your concurrence, leadership from both jurisdictions are reviewing the incident to determine the cause of any delay in dispatching units to the scene and to ensure all policies and procedures were followed.

Based on Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments ("MWCOG") existing policies, jurisdiction over the Potomac River is held concurrently by the United States Coast Guard for the entire length of the river and by the State of Maryland for the river upstream of Chain Bridge. Montgomery County, Maryland has jurisdiction over this area of the Potomac River, with MCFRS as the primary response agency. During this incident, the initial call(s) for help were received by Montgomery County Communications and a MCFRS response was initiated. It was determined through subsequent calls that the person was on the Virginia side of the river, at which point the LCFR response was initiated.

The MWCOG *Potomac River Rescue, Assistance, and Emergency Incident Response Plan*, dated May 2020, is silent on the dispatching of fire and rescue units, specifically which jurisdiction(s) will be dispatched and respond to emergency incidents in the Potomac River. A note in the plan states that "Notification and Dispatch procedures for maritime incidents are under development through the COG PSAP working group." We propose that the May 2020 version of this plan be returned to the working group that authored it and that the MWCOG Senior Operations Fire Chiefs be assigned oversight of the plan to ensure that appropriate dispatch methodology procedures are included within the plan itself, as opposed to a future appendix as indicated.

Teamwork \* Integrity \* Professionalism \* Service

It is paramount that dispatch methodology for water rescue events on the Potomac River include a dual dispatch of mutual aid jurisdictions to ensure that adequate and timely resources respond to any emergency, regardless of jurisdictional oversight. The mission of all involved should be to respond quickly and provide effective lifesaving and emergency medical service to those in need in the shortest amount of time.

We look forward to discussing further and working with our COG Fire Chiefs Committee to ensure that our mission is met for the greater good of the public in our respective jurisdictions.

Sincerely,



Keith H. Johnson, System Chief  
Loudoun County Fire and Rescue



John Butler, Fire Chief  
Fairfax County Fire and Rescue

cc: Joe Knerr, Fairfax County Assistant Chief of Operations  
James Williams, Loudoun County Assistant Chief of Operations