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S.O.P. #: 400-19

SUBJECT: STATION ALERTING

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

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Objective: To provide guidelines for Company Commanders that will ensure the efficient receipt of alarms. The guidelines will also provide the members with an overview of the responsibilities of maintaining and operating the alerting system and associated emergency systems.

Section 1: Watch Duty

- A. A floor watch shall be maintained during the hours of 0700 and 2300. During periods when it will be necessary to dispense with the watch for house drills, etc., the officer-in-charge shall be responsible for the receipt of alarms and station security.
- B. Stations shall be maintained so that when the station is occupied it will not be possible for anyone to enter without the knowledge of some member of the company.
- C. The officer-in-charge shall arrange the watch duty of all members as equally as possible.
- D. Watch duty assignments shall be posted and maintained in the company journal. Members may exchange watch periods with permission of the officer-in-charge.
- E. Members shall report for their assigned watch duty to the area in the station designated as the watch area, at the time specified.
- F. Members on watch duty shall be alert and active while performing the following duties:
  - 1. The accurate receipt of all alarms and communications from Fire Dispatch, as well as any fire or emergency call received from a source other than Fire Dispatch ("still alarm"). The member receiving a "still alarm" shall immediately advise the officer-in-charge and Fire Dispatch of the nature and location of the reported incident, and alert station personnel to prepare for response.
  - 2. The member shall be alert for any condition that could cause physical harm to personnel, apparatus, and station property, or would deter response to alarms.
  - 3. The member on watch shall be responsible for retention or disposition of all CRT messages received that may concern the station's operations. If any doubt exists concerning the messages, the officer-in-charge shall be consulted. Members in stations where Battalion/Division Chiefs are assigned will place a copy of all CRT messages pertaining to their battalion on the Battalion/Division Chief's desk.
- G. When Repair Shop or maintenance personnel enter the station, the officer-in-charge shall be notified immediately.
- H. When information is desired, or conditions arise which the member on watch cannot handle properly, the member shall summon the officer-in-charge.

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I. Visitors To The Station

1. Visitors who enter the station shall be respectfully approached and their business ascertained. When the nature of the business is such that the member is required to leave the watch area, the officer-in-charge shall be summoned.
  2. After identifying themselves, visitors requesting to tour the station shall be escorted on a tour.
  3. When an elected official of the Baltimore County Government, the Fire Chief, or Chief Officer enters the station on official business, the member on watch will immediately notify the officer-in-charge, who shall cause station members to assemble in formation and introduce them by name.
  4. Juveniles visiting the station must be accompanied by an adult. If not in the company of an adult, they shall immediately be told to leave; except when visiting a station member or requesting specific information, in which case the officer-in-charge shall be notified. Under no circumstances will juveniles be allowed around the station without the company of a station member. The member so assigned shall be held strictly responsible for the safety of such visitors while in the station.
  5. Off-duty members entering stations must courteously identify themselves to the member on watch unless they positively know their identity.
  6. Persons loitering or entering the station for the purpose of soliciting is strictly forbidden.
- J. The member on watch duty shall maintain the area in a neat, clean, and orderly manner.
- K. The member on watch shall call for relief five (5) minutes prior to the time designated for change.
- L. Members may instruct their family to utilize the station centrex phone number for any emergencies (day or night). This phone, however, will not be used for non departmental business.
- M. The station's centrex phone shall be utilized to report off duty or sick leave.
- N. To ensure the efficient and effective alerting of Battalion Chiefs and Acting Battalion Chiefs, it will be necessary for those personnel to stay at the assigned Chief's quarters during night hours.

Section 2: Alerting System

- A. Emergency fire alarm boxes located in front of the station shall be tested weekly by making voice contact with the Dispatch Center Alarm Room. Records of said test shall be maintained in the company journal. Periodic inspection of the indicator light is also necessary to ensure proper illumination of the fire alarm box. The recommended replacement bulb is a 15 watt appliance bulb.
- B. The Power Interruption Indicator shall be maintained in the dorm area.
1. In the event the station loses electrical power, this device will sound an audible alarm. To silence this alarm, it will be necessary to do the following:
    - a. Temporarily relocate that Power Interruption Indicator to an electrical outlet that is powered by the emergency generator; or

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- b. Disconnect the Power Interruption Indicator from the electrical outlet and open the unit and remove one of the batteries.
    2. During periods when the Power Interruption Indicator is disabled or removed from the dorm area, it will be necessary to establish and maintain a continuous floor watch.
    3. The Power Interruption Indicator shall be tested weekly by depressing the test switch, which will activate the audible signal. Records of said test shall be maintained in the company journal.
  - C. The officer-in-charge shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining a continuous floor watch during periods when the alerting system, or components thereof, fail to perform in a satisfactory manner. These components shall include, but are not limited to, station decoders, switching modules, Power Interruption Indicators, direct phones (red phones) and the station's emergency fire alarm box. The officer-in-charge may also establish and maintain a continuous floor watch during certain adverse conditions. These conditions may include, but are not limited to, periods of civil unrest or severe weather conditions.
  - D. Procedural Alerting Events (Career Stations)
    1. The phantom box number will be broadcast.
    2. Companies due to respond are alerted via the tone system, which will activate appropriate alarms, lights, speakers, etc., in designated areas of the station. After the stations have been alerted, the Fire Dispatch Center will broadcast the phantom box number, the running assignment, the type of incident, and the address.
    3. The alternate alarm circuit, in addition to activating the backup bells, will also activate an auxiliary door circuit.
      - a. Upon specific command of the direct line circuit, a station door can be opened from the Dispatch Center. This function is separate from the Encoding System and, therefore, station doors will not be inadvertently activated when the station is initially alerted.
      - b. However, this system will facilitate a means of access to stations when other companies are transferring to it. It should be noted that when this system is requested to be activated, it will activate the station back-up bells, in addition to opening a door.
    4. In the event this back-up system fails, the second alternate alerting method will be utilization of the departmental Centrex phone system.
      - a. The extension phone located in or near the Captain's dorm area shall be maintained for this purpose.
      - b. In those situations where the Captain's room is remotely isolated from the main dorm area, it will be necessary for the Lieutenant to relocate to the Captain's room, in the absence of the Captain, to ensure that the Dispatch Center will be able to contact the station during periods when the watch desk is unattended.
  - E. When the Baltimore County Police Department places Phase I of the Snow Emergency Plan into effect during the hours of 2300 to 0700, each station will be notified via the centrex telephone network by the Fire Dispatch Center.

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- F. During the periods when the watch desk is unattended, it will be the responsibility of all members to remain in an area of the station that is adequately covered by the station's alarm system to ensure that all personnel can be effectively alerted.
  
- G. Maintenance of Alerting System and Associated Components
  - 1. The Radio Shop shall provide the maintenance of the alerting system and associated components; i.e., decoders, switching modules and Power Interruption Indicators.
  - 2. In the event the station's decoding equipment or associated components fail to successfully alert station personnel, the officer-in-charge shall notify the Fire Dispatch.
  - 3. The officer-in-charge shall also notify the Superintendent of Communications by forwarding a Communications Problem Report. This report shall be utilized to compile statistical maintenance information only, and a reply will not be returned to the station.