

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



October 5, 2011

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray  
Mayor  
District of Columbia  
Mayor's Correspondence Unit, Suite 316  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mayor Gray:

Enclosed please find a copy of a Management Alert Report (MAR 11-1-003), entitled *Number of FEMS Personnel Stationed at OUC Not Justified in Light of Many Operations Vacancies*, that the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) issued to the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) and the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) on August 10, 2011. During our fieldwork, the OIG found that FEMS has stationed 13 senior employees at OUC as liaisons. However, there is no official, written agreement authorizing FEMS's presence at OUC, such as a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU). In addition, at the time of our review, FEMS officials did not provide a clear picture to the OIG of measurable benefits to either FEMS or OUC operations that would justify this large number of employees at OUC during a serious FEMS staffing shortage.

OUC's response to the MAR, dated September 19, 2011, and FEMS's response to the MAR dated September 22, 2011, also are enclosed. OUC stated that it plans to set up a "transition committee" with FEMS and update the pilot program's MOU to establish a 6-month transition period in which FEMS personnel will be "phased out" from OUC. In contrast, FEMS asserted that the placement of its employees at OUC has "achieved significant synergies and efficiencies that would not be possible if they were working in remote locations." FEMS stated that it will work with OUC to complete an MOU and will complete an assessment to justify the benefit of having its personnel stationed at OUC by October 30, 2011.

Although the OIG is conducting an ongoing inspection at OUC for which a report will be completed later this year, we are providing this information to you now so that you are aware of the importance of the issues addressed in the MAR and the corrective actions proposed by OUC and FEMS.

Letter to Mayor Gray  
October 5, 2011  
Page 2 of 4

If you have questions, please contact Alvin Wright, Jr., Assistant Inspector General for Inspections and Evaluations, at (202) 727-2540.

Sincerely,

  
Charles J. Willoughby  
Inspector General

CJW/ebs

Enclosures

cc: See distribution list

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL  
CHARLES J. WILLOUGHBY  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

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INSPECTIONS AND EVALUATIONS DIVISION  
*MANAGEMENT ALERT REPORT*

**D.C. FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL  
SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
AND  
OFFICE OF UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS**

**NUMBER OF FEMS PERSONNEL STATIONED AT  
OUC NOT JUSTIFIED  
IN LIGHT OF MANY OPERATIONAL VACANCIES**

**MAR 11-I-003**  
**AUGUST 10, 2011**

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**Mission Statement**

The Inspections and Evaluations (I&E) Division of the Office of the Inspector General is dedicated to providing District of Columbia (D.C.) government decision makers with objective, thorough, and timely evaluations and recommendations that will assist them in achieving efficiency, effectiveness and economy in operations and programs. I&E's goals are to help ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, identify accountability, recognize excellence, and promote continuous improvement in the delivery of services to D.C. residents and others who have a vested interest in the success of the city.

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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



August 10, 2011

Kenneth B. Ellerbe  
Chief  
D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department  
1923 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Teddy Kavaleri  
Interim Director  
Office of Unified Communications  
2720 Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20032

Dear Chief Ellerbe and Mr. Kavaleri:

This is a Management Alert Report (MAR 11-I-003) to inform you that during our inspection of the Office of Unified Communications (OUC), the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) determined that there are a number of issues regarding 13 senior Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) employees assigned to OUC as liaisons:

- there is no official, written agreement authorizing their presence, such as a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the agencies;
- FEMS officials did not provide evidence to the OIG of any measurable benefit to either FEMS or OUC operations to justify this large number of employees who have high salaries;
- these employees have been working at OUC while FEMS reports a staffing shortage of over 100 vacancies and OIG-determined overtime costs of almost \$5 million over budget;
- their presence reportedly has been a source of friction between OUC and FEMS employees; and
- an OUC senior official opined that only 5 of the 13 FEMS liaisons may be required to provide support to OUC emergency operations that FEMS officials say is needed.

The OIG provides these reports when it believes a matter requires priority attention by District government officials.

## Background

Various FEMS and OUC officials did not have detailed or specific information about the circumstances, timing, and justification for detailing FEMS personnel to OUC. According to one official, during former Mayor Anthony Williams' term, an EMS officer was detailed to OUC. This EMS officer was a certified EMT responsible for monitoring EMS medical calls and ensuring that units were put back into service quickly after delivering patients to hospitals. Another official stated that in the aftermath of the David Rosenbaum case, former Mayor Adrian Fenty established a fire liaison officer (FLO) position and two emergency liaison officer (ELO) positions at OUC. In May 2010, an FEMS official stated that FEMS personnel have been working at OUC for approximately 2 ½ years.

FEMS officials provided the OIG with an undated, unsigned document entitled *Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] Between DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department and the Office of Unified Communication* (see Attachment) that appears to establish a FLO program and position at OUC. An FEMS official stated that this MOU was the basis for stationing FEMS personnel at OUC; however, according to another FEMS official, the FEMS senior official who drafted the MOU reportedly could not confirm that it "was officially signed, in spite of it being agreed to." When the OIG team interviewed the official involved in drafting the MOU, the official stated that it was signed, but was unable to produce a signed copy. Yet another FEMS official stated a belief that the former OUC Director did not sign the MOU because she did not want FEMS employees at OUC. An OUC senior official recalled seeing a draft of the MOU, but did not have a signed copy.

According to the MOU, the FLO would:

assist in facilitating the correct dispatching or non-dispatching of FEMS resources according to FEMS policies and operating procedures. This will be accomplished by monitoring the OUC operations and recommending changes in dispatch policies where appropriate.

This wording implies that FEMS had concerns about OUC employee errors when dispatching FEMS "resources." The FLO also was to be responsible for training "OUC instructors and other personnel on FEMS policies and operations . . . ." The MOU describes the FLO program as a "pilot" program to remain in effect "for a minimum of 60 days." It calls for one FLO to be assigned to each OUC shift.

An FEMS official involved with drafting the MOU stated that FEMS and OUC held meetings in late 2007 and 2008 to develop this program. He/she added that FEMS first began detailing its personnel to OUC in May or June 2008. Officials stated that they were detailed to OUC in the following order: battalion chief, FLO, ELO-1, and ELO-2. An ELO position replaced the original EMS officer position.

## Observations and Analysis

### Current Staffing and Operations at OUC

***FEMS Staffing.*** The 13 FEMS employees in the liaison program are assigned as follows:

- 1 battalion chief who acts as an agency liaison, handles communication between FEMS and OUC, and supervises FEMS employees working at OUC.
- 4 FLOs who are experts on fire and hazmat-based incidents. They monitor fire-related matters at OUC to ensure the appropriate dispatch of FEMS units and assignment of resources, and have final authority on ensuring that calls are coded correctly to dispatch appropriate FEMS resources.
- 4 ELO-1s who are experts in non-emergency and emergency medical services incidents. The ELO-1 has a supervisory role over FEMS personnel stationed at OUC and acts as the primary ELO liaison to the battalion chief at OUC. This position is responsible for such tasks as documenting patient refusals to be transported to hospitals.
- 4 ELO-2s who provide FEMS units with the appropriate hospital assignments and guidance during transports, and assist in the hospital notification process. ELO-2s are to remain aware of the capabilities of area hospitals, ensure that units are routed to those accepting patients, and avoid a back-up of FEMS units with patients needing treatment.

The FEMS liaisons at OUC work 12-hour shifts. During each shift, there is one FLO, one ELO-1, and one ELO-2.<sup>1</sup>

***FEMS-OUC Operations.*** The team found that the current operation of the FEMS Fire Liaison Program differs from what is stated in the unsigned MOU:

- The MOU focuses only on the responsibilities of the FLOs working in conjunction with the EMS officer at OUC; there is no mention of stationing ELOs there.
- FEMS personnel assigned to OUC were not to be ranked above captain or below lieutenant. Currently, however, there are a battalion chief and sergeants.
- The program would run for a minimum of 60 days as a pilot program, after which it would be jointly evaluated by both agencies for its effectiveness. According to an FEMS official, the agencies did not conduct a formal evaluation.
- The MOU does not have a start or end date for the pilot period. As noted above, FEMS officials have now been stationed at OUC for several years.

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<sup>1</sup> Each FLO, ELO-1, and ELO-2 works the 2/2/4 schedule, which consists of two consecutive day shifts, two consecutive night shifts, and four consecutive days off.

According to FEMS officials, FEMS employees are stationed at OUC to ensure that OUC dispatches FEMS units correctly. ELOs ensure that FEMS units transport patients to the appropriate hospitals and communicate with hospitals on the availability of beds. In addition, an FEMS official stated that FEMS found errors in OUC's dispatching of FEMS calls, and these errors occurred because OUC dispatchers do not have institutional knowledge of FEMS processes. According to three FEMS officials, sometimes OUC dispatchers send the incorrect FEMS units to the scene and do not assign accurate dispatching codes. One of these FEMS officials said that not all OUC shifts operate in the same manner; for example, OUC supervisors do not interpret FEMS policies and procedures consistently.

***MPD-OUC Operations.*** According to OUC data, from October 1, 2010 - February 28, 2011, the highest percentage of calls (77%) were related to MPD matters.<sup>2</sup> Only 22% of 911 calls pertained to FEMS matters (80% EMS and 20% fire-related). However, MPD has only one full-time liaison employee at OUC, a Commander, who addresses complaints to OUC management about communication between MPD and OUC call-takers. An MPD official stated that MPD has good communication with OUC and the agencies collaborate to resolve issues. He/she added that the current manager of OUC's 911 operations formerly worked at MPD before OUC was created and understands MPD procedures well. He/she could only recall receiving four or five complaints, which were from citizens inquiring why OUC call-takers had to ask so many questions. The official stated that callers do not understand that OUC call-takers have to follow certain protocols when handling MPD calls.

#### Conflicting Opinions on Need for FEMS Employees at OUC

The Government Accountability Office *Internal Control Management and Evaluation Tool* recommends as a best practice that “[m]anagement periodically evaluate[] the organizational structure and make[] changes as necessary in response to changing conditions” and that agencies have “the appropriate number of employees, particularly in managerial positions.”<sup>3</sup>

The team's interviews with FEMS and OUC officials revealed disparate opinions about whether FEMS needs 13 of its employees at OUC. FEMS officials predicted negative consequences if these employees are removed from OUC. An FEMS official stated that by means of their expertise, FEMS personnel at OUC ensure that the correct apparatus is dispatched to the scene and that hospitals can accommodate patients. The official opined that otherwise, OUC would go back to business as usual with no accountability for its mistakes. Another FEMS official implied that removing FEMS personnel from OUC operations would negatively impact

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<sup>2</sup> The Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is a software package that displays information pertaining to each incoming 911 call on a computer screen. CAD also has the ability to locate the closest FEMS response unit to the scene of the emergency and can select that unit to respond to the emergency. According to an OUC senior official, the above figures pertain to 911 calls recorded as an event in CAD and not all calls received by OUC's 911 operations. OUC only tracks whether a call pertains to an FEMS or MPD matter and is recorded as a CAD event. Duplicate calls and those that are abandoned or misdialed do not result in a CAD event. Another 1% of calls pertained to the Department of Real Estate Services' Protective Services Police Department.

<sup>3</sup> GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, INTERNAL CONTROL MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION TOOL, GAO-01-1008G, 16 (Aug. 2001).

OUC because OUC lacks specific expertise to handle hospital transports. A third FEMS official stated that previously, when OUC dispatchers noticed they had used an incorrect code, they would not change it and would say they were following OUC procedures. This official added that when he/she distributed new policies and procedures to OUC personnel, policy implementation would last only a day because the policies would be thrown into the trash instead of kept as guidance. He/she recommended that OUC dispatchers continue to study FEMS fire and medical protocols, ask questions, and seek guidance from FEMS personnel when they are unsure of a procedure.

On the other hand, in January 2011, an OUC senior official did not see the need for the FLO and ELO-2 positions at OUC. He/she opined that most of the ELO-2 responsibilities could be carried out in the field or at FEMS locations. He/she added that ELO-2 responsibilities duplicate those of the EMS supervisor in the field. While an FLO is an expert in handling fire-related matters, this official did not think the FLO was needed at OUC because FEMS routinely assigns a battalion chief to the scene of a fire. However, the official does believe that the agency liaison position is needed to continue to facilitate communication between FEMS and OUC. Also, the ELO-1 position is needed to route units to hospitals based on information about patient backlogs in emergency rooms. OUC dispatchers are not authorized to handle medical emergencies related to ambulances and hospitals, and are not medically certified to determine a patient's condition. This official added that OUC dispatchers think FEMS personnel are not doing much at OUC and that it would be more efficient to have them work in the field.

In April 2011, an FEMS official stated that the ELOs and FLOs could perform their duties at any location if they had access to the CAD system and radio channels. However, it is beneficial to have them physically stationed at OUC to immediately intervene if they observe a dispatching error. By being able to correct an issue immediately, FEMS does not lose time during an emergency or send the wrong resources to a scene. This official added that FEMS and OUC managers met in March 2011 to discuss the possible removal of FEMS employees from OUC. Both parties agreed that the ELO-1 and ELO-2 positions were necessary at OUC because FEMS provided data that showed "drop times"<sup>4</sup> have decreased since ELOs began working at OUC. This official stated that the City Administrator was in agreement with maintaining ELOs at OUC. However, FEMS was unable to convince OUC management that FLOs were needed at OUC, as FEMS had no data to support their impact on OUC operations. This official commented that OUC wants the FLOs removed from OUC.

In June 2011, an OUC senior official stated that recently OUC and FEMS senior officials had constructive discussions about the liaison program. FEMS provided OUC with "statements" regarding statistical data that justify ELO-1 and ELO-2 presence at OUC. Even had they provided such data, this official opined that he/she does not feel that he/she would be qualified to interpret the data if the FEMS Medical Director believes the ELOs are needed at OUC. However, FEMS was unable to justify assigning FLOs to OUC, and OUC plans to discuss this matter further with FEMS. The OUC official stated that the agency liaison position does foster communication between the agencies and should remain at OUC. Currently, OUC and FEMS

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<sup>4</sup> According to an FEMS official, "drop time" refers to the response time interval beginning when a transport unit arrives at a hospital and ending when the transport unit is available for service for another call.

are working on a revised MOU and expect it to be completed in the next 35 to 40 days. The goal of both agencies is to clarify roles and responsibilities in the liaison program. The official added that the Deputy Mayor has instructed FEMS and OUC to work together to resolve the issues regarding the placement of FEMS liaisons at OUC.

#### FEMS Unable to Provide Evidence of Significant OUC Dispatch Errors

FEMS officials stated that one reason they are at OUC is to correct errors made when OUC dispatches FEMS units. An FEMS official estimated that there are about one to two dispatching errors in a given week. However, the OIG team found that FEMS is not systematically documenting OUC dispatching errors and providing the information to OUC for analysis and collaborative action.

FEMS Special Order 2007-34 as well as the unsigned MOU state that the FLO will complete a daily report using the current after-action report form to identify any event that occurred during his/her tour of duty that highlights trends, problem areas, and system issues to be proactively addressed. An FEMS official stated that only FLOs complete these reports. In addition, ELOs complete a desk journal that reflects emergency responses, training, and any information pertinent to his/her tour of duty. The Internal ELO Operating Procedures states that the ELO-1 “[r]esearches and analyzes questionable medical dispatch and transport decisions and prepares or presents findings and makes recommendations for improvement.” This procedure does not explain how an ELO-1 or ELO-2 should record dispatch errors so that FEMS can analyze trends.

An OUC senior official stated that FEMS has not provided OUC with daily reports that identify trends, problem areas, or system issues in OUC’s call center. Problems are not reported to OUC daily; rather, any concerns are brought to OUC’s attention every few weeks. According to this official, during calendar year (CY) 2010, FEMS submitted 19 complaints on OUC’s handling of 911 calls.<sup>5</sup> Of those, 11 pertained to dispatching errors (an average of less than 1 per month). OUC investigated 18 of these complaints<sup>6</sup> and agreed that OUC employees were at fault in 10 of them but not the remaining 8.

The team reviewed these 19 complaints and found that those that were sustained dealt with issues such as OUC using the wrong radio frequency or dispatching FEMS units to an incorrect address. In the write-up on one of the complaints that was not sustained, OUC appeared to admonish FEMS not to bother OUC with complaints about technical matters if the dispatching was handled correctly. In response to the FEMS complaint, an OUC manager wrote: “Chief [ ], this database is not designed for your [sic] to point out a technical problem that is an in-house fix that you will not get feed-back on. As long as the call was categorized correctly and the proper dispatch assignment was sent – FEMS should be good.”

During fieldwork, the team requested the FEMS after-action reports from April 1, 2010 - September 30, 2010. FEMS provided reports for CYs 2007 through 2010 and clarified that they

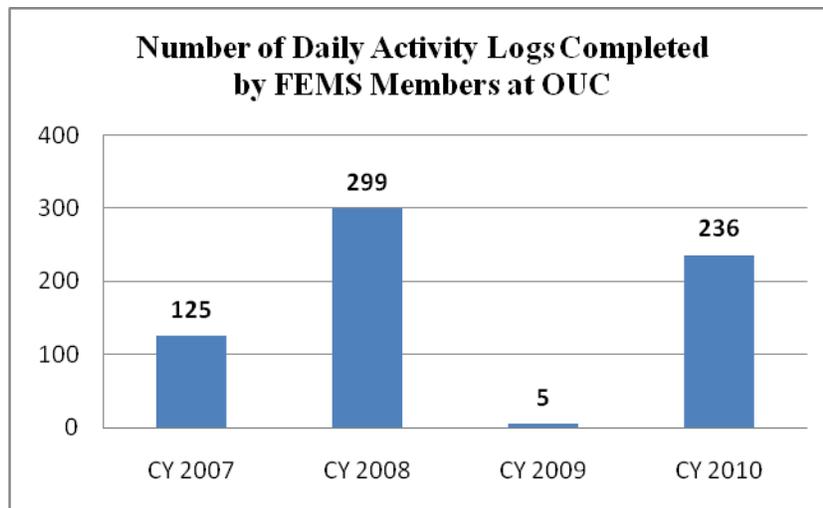
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<sup>5</sup> One of these complaints was submitted by the union president of FEMS.

<sup>6</sup> One investigation had not concluded when the OIG team acquired this information.

are referred to as “Daily Activity Logs.” The team found that the log entries were not detailed enough to determine whether an entry reflected an OUC dispatching error. For example, some entries noted, “CAD status change.” Another recorded verification of the Reserve Apparatus status in CAD and making corrections as needed, or verification of the unit status in CAD throughout the tour of duty and updating this as necessary. An FEMS official stated that FEMS does not have written policies and procedures for completing these logs. He noted that it is “difficult to explain how a firefighter knows what to enter into a Daily Activity Log, but he/she knows. I guess it can be said that [t]he ‘[c]ulture’ of the organization governs this situation.”

The team found that the number of Daily Activity Logs completed by FEMS employees at OUC during CYs 2007 through 2010 ranged from 5 to 299 logs per year, as shown in the chart below. In response to the OIG’s request for the after-action reports required by Special Order 2007-34, an FEMS official stated that FEMS had personnel changes during our requested time period and “every effort [was] being made to capture the requested information from reassigned personnel.” Irrespective of personnel changes, and given the significant gaps in Daily Activity Logs, it is not clear how FEMS can accurately analyze trends in dispatch problems and use the analysis as the basis for seeking improvements in OUC dispatching.



#### Unmeasured Benefits of FEMS Presence at OUC May Not Justify Costs

FEMS presence at OUC represents a significant personnel expense. The team analyzed regular pay and overtime earnings for FEMS employees in the liaison program for a recent 6-month period. As shown in the table on the following page, it cost FEMS nearly \$700,000 to assign its personnel to this program. An FEMS official stated that overtime was worked to fill in for employees on sick or annual leave. Five FEMS employees who worked at OUC were cited in a news report that listed FEMS’s top 25 overtime earners in fiscal year (FY) 2010.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Roby Chavez, *Allegations of Overtime Abuse in DC Fire and EMS Department*, FOX FIVE NEWS, Jan. 3, 2011, see <http://www.myfoxdc.com/dpp/news/dc/allegations-of-overtime-abuse-in-dc-fire-and-ems-department-010311> (last visited Mar. 24, 2011).

**Estimate of Wages Paid to FEMS Employees Detailed to OUC  
 March 28, 2010 – September 30, 2010**

	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Regular Hours Worked at OUC</b>	<b>Overtime Hours Worked at OUC</b>	<b>Wages for Regular Hours</b>	<b>Wages for Overtime Hours<sup>8</sup></b>
<b>Liaison Personnel at OUC</b>	16 <sup>9</sup>	15,232	977	\$612,100	\$40,426
<b>Fill-in Personnel at OUC<sup>10</sup></b>	27	263	643	\$11,093	\$24,516
<b>Total</b>	<b>43<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>15,495</b>	<b>1,620</b>	<b>\$623,193</b>	<b>\$64,942</b>

In April 2011, an FEMS official stated that FEMS employees at OUC no longer work overtime due to overtime restrictions. FEMS uses fill-in personnel to prevent the need for overtime.

In FY 2010, FEMS had an approved overtime budget of \$7 million but spent over \$11.8 million.<sup>12</sup> In April 2010, D.C. Councilmember Phil Mendelson, Chairperson of the Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary, issued a letter to the District’s Chief Financial Officer stating that the former FEMS Chief “has failed to manage overtime and allowed its abuse or misuse, and has chosen not to adopt strategies that would reduce costs.” Following Councilmember Mendelson’s comments, the former Chief issued a memorandum via email to FEMS personnel concerning the overtime issue. In the email, the Chief stated:

I’ve testified before his Committee on numerous occasions about how more than 130 operational vacancies continue to cause overtime pressures . . . . In my opinion, and based on the content of the Chairperson’s letter, the Committee misunderstands the causes of overtime in the Fire and EMS Department.

**No Collaborative Approach on Dispatch Training**

FEMS and OUC do not have a collaborative approach to developing training programs on dispatch issues. Specifically, there does not appear to be a formalized plan to draft training

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<sup>8</sup> The dollar amounts for overtime shown are based on regular hourly wages. Actual overtime amounts paid may be much higher because the figures shown do not include time and a half rates. Time and a half rates begin after a certain number of overtime hours at regular pay have been worked.

<sup>9</sup> These figures are based on 16 individuals who worked in the 13 liaison positions during this 6-month time period.

<sup>10</sup> According to an FEMS official, fill-in personnel refer to FEMS personnel who are trained to perform the functions at OUC and backfill a position when the regularly assigned liaison employee is not available.

<sup>11</sup> Three of the 43 employees served as both liaison and fill-in employees during the pay periods analyzed.

<sup>12</sup>The FEMS Schedule of Actual Expenditures was obtained from a CFOSOLVE report as of December 2, 2010.

curricula for OUC dispatchers in order to curtail the dispatching errors reported by FEMS and, in turn, diminish the need for such a large FEMS detail to OUC.

According to an FEMS memorandum issued on December 17, 2009, to its FLOs and ELOs, “The OUC with the assistance of the OUC Liaison, Fire Liaison Officer (FLO) and/or the EMS Liaison Officer (ELO) will provide Fire/EMS department based training each Friday of the month through out [sic] the year.” The previously cited unsigned MOU states that the FLOs have “collateral responsibility for facilitating training in conjunction with the OUC’s Training Manager and Operations Manager[,]” and “train OUC instructors and other [OUC] personnel on FEMS policies and operations, as well as coordinat[e] any future policy development.” FEMS officials stated that OUC dispatchers had not received adequate training on dispatching FEMS calls. As a result, in early 2010, the FLOs and ELOs started to conduct weekly training to review dispatch coding of 911 calls as well as new policies and procedures. One of these officials said that OUC supervisors sometimes attended the training, if necessary, but the FLOs and ELOs have been the primary coordinators.

In April 2010, an FEMS official opined that dispatching had improved since FEMS began training OUC staff on FEMS codes and protocols. However, during a subsequent interview in April 2011, this official opined that although FEMS employees have provided weekly training, there still are many OUC dispatch errors and the training has not diminished the need to assign FEMS personnel at OUC. This official gave the impression that he/she identified training needs from speaking with dispatchers while at OUC.

An OUC senior official who commented on the training FEMS provided stated that FEMS personnel provide high-level training to OUC employees using real-life scenarios during OUC roll calls. However, he/she cited a lack of personal knowledge about the frequency and structure of such training, and stated that he/she had not sought the opinions of OUC personnel about FEMS training. He/she noted that if FEMS personnel were removed, OUC would want FEMS training every 60 to 90 days on rotating topics and changes in FEMS policies.

#### OUC-FEMS Relationship Appears Strained

An OUC senior official stated that OUC dispatchers feel that FEMS personnel are always looking over their shoulders and second-guessing their decisions. An OUC dispatcher stated that sometimes, an OUC dispatcher will dispatch a call using a specific code and an FEMS member will change the code to a higher priority without citing a written protocol for the new code.

FEMS has issued various procedures regarding the responsibilities of its personnel at OUC as well as how OUC and FEMS employees are to interact. For instance, FEMS issued Special Order 2007-34 in May 2007 on the responsibilities of the Fire Liaison at OUC, Memorandum 37 in June 2006 regarding EMS-6 guidelines, and a comprehensive Office of Unified Communication Operation Manual that outlines the various roles and responsibilities of FEMS and OUC personnel in handling and responding to 911 FEMS-related calls.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This manual did not reflect a publication date. According to an FEMS official, the manual was developed by FEMS for OUC and reviewed by OUC. In May 2010, the team requested copies of FLO and ELO position

FEMS Special Order 2007-34 states that the FLO will have “final authority on changing calls [to OUC] for FEMS resources...” and “every attempt will be made to collaborate with the [w]atch [c]ommander on decisions affecting [FEMS].” The unsigned MOU states that “[o]n those occasions where a specific dispatch to an incident is questioned, the FLO shall coordinate with the [w]atch [c]ommander who will instruct OUC personnel.” In practice, however, the team found that FEMS personnel communicate dispatching errors differently at OUC. Two FEMS officials stated that they go through the chain-of-command by forwarding complaints to the OUC Operations Manager who in turn investigates them. In contrast, another FEMS official stated that he/she will “yell” over to a dispatcher if a call needs to be upgraded or downgraded and he/she will walk over directly to a dispatcher to give instructions to make a change to correct a problem immediately.

One FEMS official stated that sometimes FEMS will “bump heads” with the OUC watch commander and assistant watch commander on developing new policies for needed changes. Another official stated that he/she has a good working relationship with the OUC operations manager and watch commander to discuss any concerns or clarifications on policies and procedures.

## **Conclusion**

The team could find no clear justification for detailing all 13 FEMS liaison personnel to OUC on a long-term basis, or for there to be a 24-hour a day FEMS presence in the midst of OUC operations. FEMS and OUC officials apparently agree on the value of having ELO-1s at OUC to monitor and guide hospital transports. However, FEMS and OUC officials disagree on the validity of the FEMS-implied argument that OUC dispatch errors are so numerous that FEMS guidance is needed 24 hours a day for an indefinite period of time, and FEMS did not provide documentation to support its view. Additionally, it is unclear that OUC senior management fully supports the need for the FLOs and ELO-2s at OUC. FEMS employees at OUC have not tracked and collected dispatch error data that could be shared with OUC. Without such evidence, FEMS cannot know if the resources expended at OUC are either effective or necessary. Given the reported large number of FEMS vacancies and related overtime costs, FEMS should either provide evidence of measurable operational and cost benefits from its large OUC presence, or shift all or some of these resources back to FEMS areas that benefit from a more efficient operational and fiscal strategy.

## **Recommendations**

1. That the Chief of FEMS (C/FEMS) and the OUC Interim Director immediately execute a short-term formal, dated, and signed MOU pending an assessment of FEMS staffing at OUC by C/FEMS. The MOU should explicitly define roles and responsibilities of FEMS employees and FEMS-OUC employee interaction at all levels. Any permanent, long-

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descriptions from an FEMS official, but the team only received FEMS’ Internal ELO Operating Procedures that described the responsibilities of ELO positions. The team did not receive any documents that reflect the responsibilities of the FLO position, except what is stated in the unsigned MOU. In June 2010, an FEMS official stated that FEMS had provided the team with all ELO and FLO information that exists.

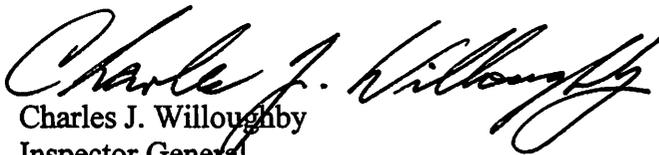
term MOU adopted after the C/FEMS assessment should be updated as necessary each calendar or fiscal year.

2. That C/FEMS: (a) immediately assess the justification, cost benefit, and operational benefit of continuing to detail the current number of FEMS employees to OUC; (b) determine which FEMS positions, if any, should continue at OUC; and (c) provide the results of the assessment and any action taken to the City Administrator, the Committee on the Judiciary, and the Inspector General.

Please provide your comments on this MAR by August 24, 2011. Your response should include actions taken or planned, dates for completion of planned actions, and reasons for any disagreement with the concerns and recommendations presented. Please distribute this MAR only to those who will be directly involved in preparing your response.

Should you have any questions prior to preparing your response, please contact [REDACTED] Director of Planning and Inspections, at 202 [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

  
Charles J. Willoughby  
Inspector General

CJW/ebs

cc: Mr. Allen Y. Lew, City Administrator, District of Columbia  
The Honorable Kwame R. Brown, Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia  
The Honorable Muriel Bowser, Chairperson, Committee on Government Operations  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairperson, Committee on the Judiciary

**ATTACHMENT**

**FEMS FIRE LIAISON OFFICER Pilot PROGRAM  
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN  
DC FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
AND  
THE OFFICE OF UNIFIED COMMUNICATION**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Office of Unified Communications in conjunction with the Fire and Emergency Medical Services, (FEMS) Department is entering into a partnership to institute the first ever FEMS Fire Liaison Officer Program and to continue the EMS-6 program. The officers who are regularly assigned to this position shall hold the minimum rank of Lieutenant, but not greater in rank of Captain; this does not preclude the agency from detailing department personnel as needed. This is in an effort not to deplete FEMS of valued expertise, but to give to the FLO position a minimum level of knowledge and experience. The intent is to have the individual work in conjunction with the already established EMS-6 position at the OUC and to address identified areas needing attention, improvement or concern.

This individual may also be called upon to assist in conducting investigations and may hold valued critiques after incidents that warrant the need.

**PURPOSE**

The Fire Liaison position to be located at the OUC is designed to assist in facilitating the correct dispatching or non-dispatching of FEMS resources according to FEMS policies and operating procedures. This will be accomplished by monitoring the OUC operations and recommending changes in dispatch policies where appropriate. Normal Decisions for dispatches will remain the responsibility of the OUC. On those occasions where a specific dispatch to an incident is questioned, the FLO shall coordinate with the Watch Commander who will instruct OUC personnel. This does not preclude the FLO from communicating suggestions and clarification directly on the assigned radio channel as the situation warrants.

The Fire Liaison will also have collateral responsibility for facilitating training in conjunction with the OUC's Training Manager and Operations Manager. The Fire Liaison will be responsible for the training of OUC

instructors and other personnel on FEMS policies and operations, as well as coordinating any future policy development.

The OUC Watch Commander will continue to be in charge of OUC personnel and the operations of the call center with the exception of FEMS personnel. This is a cooperative effort and, as such, every attempt will be made to collaborate with the Watch Commander on decisions affecting the Fire Emergency Medical Services Department.

## **INTERPRETATIONS**

In this pilot program FEMS and the OUC are looking for motivated officers eager to teach and learn in a position that will allow for a better working relationship and tool for sharing knowledge in a quick and organized fashion.

The OUC is made up of individuals from diverse backgrounds and ethnic cultures. FEMS will consider this diversity when making the selection of officers to serve in this capacity.

The OUC will have a representative present at the FEMS selection process for the members assigned to this critical endeavor, further the OUC will be a member of the panel making the personnel selections and conducting brief interviews of the selected individuals; the intent is to forge a seamless partnership and continue the success and productivity that has developed as a result of the EMS-6/Hospital Destination Program.

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

The Parties understand and agree that this is a pilot program that will remain in effect for a minimum of 60 days. At the completion of the 60 day trial period the FLO Program shall be jointly evaluated for its effectiveness by both agencies.

## **SHIFT:**

For continuity of operations and to keep relief problems at a minimum, the Fire Liaison position will be staffed in 12-hour shifts to coincide with either the OUC 4 platoon system or the current 24-hour platoon schedule of the Operations Division. FEMS will align the shift schedule at its discretion.

There will be (1) officer per shift assigned to the OUC in this position.

## **DUTIES:**

In general, it will be the responsibility of the Fire Liaison to monitor all active incidents pertaining to FEMS other than incidents where EMS-6 has primary responsibility; to coordinate with EMS-6 as necessary and advise the Watch Commander of any changes and or corrections suggested; this will be accomplished by the following

- The Fire Liaison will have authority to suggest deviation from regularly prescribed policies to field activities, after making an assessment of the information based on knowledge and professional judgment. When there is a deviation it must be justifiable and clearly necessary to achieve the mission of FEMS. In such instances, a review of all situations where there was a deviation is required.
- The Fire Liaison will work in conjunction with the on duty Watch Commander, and make the suggested changes for calls using FEMS resources as necessary; including supporting EMS-6 recommendations for more resources when appropriate.
- Monitor applications (CAD, I/Netviewer, etc.)
- Monitor dispatch and fire ground tactical radio channels.
- Bring to the attention of the Watch Commander, suggested corrective action as required regarding field providers; if no action is taken, go directly to the OIC of the unit/units in question on the appropriate channel. The purpose is to relay any pertinent information or suggested changes.
- Work with EMS-6 and the OUC Liaison Officer Make suggested policy changes.
- Endeavor to train OUC personnel regarding FEMS policies as time allows. (in conjunction with the OUC Training Manager)
- Manage all Mayday and emergency activation events at the console position provided.
- Coordinate with EMS-6 to establish continuity of FEMS presence on the Operations floor. This is simply meant to insure a FEMS personnel is on the operations floor as much as possible.
- Be responsible for all FEMS text alert updates, including paging the FFA members for the rehab and canteen units when requested and make all necessary telephone notifications including coordinating recalls of FEMS personnel with the Watch Commander

- The fire liaison will fill out a daily report utilizing the current after action report form. The purpose is to identify any event that has occurred for that tour of duty, large or small. The overall intent of this documentation is to collect information and data that will highlight trends, problem areas and system issues so that we may continue to proactively address and adjust our policies to provide the public with the most efficient and timely response to emergencies. This document will be done in soft copy and an identical copy will also be delivered via email to the Director of the OUC, Operations Manager of the OUC and the Liaison Officer of the OUC
- The Fire Liaison representative will also be responsible for the status of all fire units, i.e., PEK companies, units Out of Service, units to Training; units Out of Service to the shop for repairs and tracking Out of Service times to maximize unit availability.
- CAD entries are the primary responsibility of the OUC personnel however the FLO on duty has authority to make CAD entries on an as necessary basis to support the day to day operations.

### **RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES**

Disputes shall be resolved by a committee composed of one representative each from the agency involved in this agreement; the representative must have decision making authority.

### **MODIFICATIONS**

Any modification or amendment of this Agreement shall be valid only when reduced to writing, duly signed by representatives of each agency and attached to the original Agreement. Each party shall implement any procedures that are necessary to carry out this Agreement.



**Government of the  
District of Columbia**

**Office of the Inspector General**

*Report Fraud, Waste,  
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**Charles J. Willoughby  
Inspector General**

**Toll Free Hotline:**

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**Office of the Inspector General  
717 14th Street, NW  
Suite 500  
Washington, D.C. 20005**

**Web Page: [www.oig.dc.gov](http://www.oig.dc.gov)**

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**Attachment 1:  
Response from Office of Unified  
Communications**



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of Unified Communications



September 19, 2011

Charles J. Willoughby  
Inspector General  
717 14<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Willoughby,

In response to the Inspections and Evaluations Division's Management Alert Report for the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) and the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) Report, with the recommendation that the number of FEMS personnel stationed at OUC is not justified in light of the many operational vacancies, the OUC by October 7, 2011 will:

- In partnership with FEMS, set-up a transition committee to facilitate the phasing out of FEMS employees from the OUC.
- Update the pilot program MOU using the attached Daily Duties of the Fire Liaison Officers (FLO) Memorandum from Chief Kenneth Ellerbe, dated May 12, 2011 and a description of the Emergency Medical Services Liaison Officer (ELO) Duties Memorandum. This MOU will establish the 6 month transition period, during which FEMS employees will be phased out.
- OUC will establish an operational review committee to assess performance and provide data to support the continuity of operations after the transition.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this matter and anticipate that this operational adjustment will not compromise public safety services going forward. Please contact me directly at 202-730-0500 if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Greene  
Acting Director

**ATTACHMENTS**

1-26-2009

### Emergency Medical Services Liaison Officer (ELO)

The explosive growth of the Emergency Medical Services Liaison Officer (ELO) program has expanded ten-fold since its inception nearly 3 years ago. The work demands that are required by the ELO have far surpassed the capabilities of any single ELO provider.

The Office of Unified Communications (OUC) realized sometime ago that the high call volumes on a single EMS channel put them at a high risk for mistakes and legal liability. So to mitigate and better serve FEMS, the citizen and visitors of the District of Columbia the OUC split the once single EMS channel into a pair of EMS channels (11 & 12) because there were simply too many units on single channel to safely manage and provide quality control, A proactive move by the OUC.

For many of the same reasons and of course some different ones, The DCF/EMSD in conjunction with OUC must boost the ELO staffing position by one in order to mitigate the ever increasing chances of error and to assure all the demands required by the ELO position can be met and adequately applied.

The current single ELO position can run a code red but other components just as vital to an EMS systems performance can get tabled, simply put an ELO can only multi-task to a point. A second ELO is mission critical.

The workload of the ELO needs to be split with a second ELO in order to ensure all FEMS/OUC missions for the position are attain to the highest standards required by its superiors.

The ELO is accountable for the overall EMS field oversight in conjunction with the EMS Platoon Commander, to ensure the proficient performance of the duties as described. The following is a list of duties in the ELO's position that may or not be ratable, but are immeasurable to the Departments mission of providing high quality EMS delivery to the citizens we serve.

The ELO position is a critical function in which the Fire and EMS Department determines the sick and injured patient distribution process predicated by hospital capability, capacity and proximity.

The ELO mitigates questionable field decisions in which medical care and transportation choices conflict with medical protocols and departmental rules and regulations. The ELO performs investigative analysis of unit deployment schemes, asset utilization and unit dispatch procedures to assist in maintaining a consistent and appropriate level of service

The ELO acts as the EMS liaison with other public safety agencies, hospital administrators and attending physicians. The incumbent serves as the Medical Communications Officer in assisting EMS field command functions during disasters to

coordinate and track patient destinations with the Medical Branch Director or Medical Group Supervisor.

- Dissimulate, mitigate and research unit responses and outcomes for a cornucopia of reasons from internal and external customers. These inquiries can be from personal items left in units, request of transport assignments, to investigations.

- Dispense medical advice, advanced or basic per DHS Protocol Standards on demand. ELO staffers must transmit precise, correct and legal care and instructional special skills for those who request such. Staffers must delineate and discern in a matter of fact the exact treatment regiment for any number of medical and trauma responses along with the appropriate receiving facility as defined.

- Assist with Med Radio patches as well as prior notifications for Units that are engaged in critical care and are not able to relay pertinent information.

- Invoke, govern and call to close All Code Red Status as required. Refer to the County Hospital Alert Tracking System (CHATS) and the Northern Virginia Hospital Alliance ( NVHA) when considering transporting to a regional facility.

- Determine appropriate transportation of injured or sick Members as necessary between Police & Fire Clinic, Providence Hospital and Washington Hospital Center.

- Refer to and interpret the latest General Orders, Special Orders, Memorandums, and Department Guidelines as it pertains to emergency care, special treatment skills and treatment to all Fire Suppression and Transport Units upon request.

- During a Mass Casualty Incident, ELO'S can perform as the Communication Officer in collaboration with the Transportation Officer to advise that sector commander of hospital availability and relay Med Control directives in the absence of an on scene Medical Officer.

- ELO'S collaboration with Children's Hospital ( 2 ) assist as a Clearing House coordinator making units available from either Multiple Casualty Incident or a Mass Casualty Incident

- ELO'S Coordinate and maintain a telephone call back list in collaboration EMS Providers in case of a Mass Casualty Incident.

- Dispatch available EMS Supervisors to clear core facilities to make way for pending transport units during a Mass Casualty Incident

- Assist OUC managers and IT programmers CAD updates, EMS/Medical jargon interpretation and vise versa.

- Assist Fire Suppression and Transport Units with response directions to an unfamiliar address.

- Assist in conjunction with OUC Watch Commanders, of EMS transport Unit resource redirection, transfers and soft posts.

- Keep abreast of the latest Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Administration and Emergency Medical Dispatchers directives and publications classified and unclassified.

- Identify transport units that habitually abuse the request of additional time at the ER, non-compliance of FEMS Standard Operating Procedures as it pertains to radio etiquette and crews suspected of not carrying or answering their portable radios. Counsel or take Corrective Action as required in conjunction with a Sector Supervisor, House Officer or Battalion Chief.

- Forward all external customer complaints to the Deputy Chief of EMS either by land line or department e-mail in a timely manner.

- Assist Metropolitan Police Dept, Park Police, Capitol Police, US Secret Service, Housing Authority or any number of a Law Enforcement Agency that are plentiful in this region with information, logistics and or availability of EMS. All EMS inquiries has to been done with tact as to not violate establish HIPAA statues.

- Assist Adult Protective Services, Child Protective Services, Emergency Psychiatric Response Team, Emergency Mental Department or any number of a Social Service Program with logistics, medical advice, protocol and or the availability of EMS. All EMS inquiries has to be done with tact as to not violate established HIPAA laws

- Specifically make EMS transport units available for random inspections by Department of Health (DOH), by coordinating a location and placing units OOS until so an inspection can be executed.

- Advised and share with the Watch Commander and other OUC Dispatchers and Operators of the latest Memo's, General Orders and Special Orders that apply to our current working relationship.

- Work in unison with the newly established Incident Command Communications Officer ( ICCO ) to provide its guarantor with EMS and or ALS recommendations as it pertains to his or hers duties.

- -Coordinates and authorizes hospital closure and diversion requests.

- -Develops and follows "Individual performance plans" and "Individual development plans" of subordinate personnel.

- -Monitors unit status when placed out-of-service.
- -Evaluates the need for unit transfers when geographic coverage is needed.
- -Identifies the need to declare "Code Red" and coordinates the distribution of code 3 patients to the appropriate medical facilities.
- Recognizes and mitigates situations which may have medical-legal implications.
- Notifies the appropriate FEMS EMS officials during periods of "Code Red," "Second alarm fires and greater," "Multiple and Mass Casualty Incidents," and news worthy or high profile events in which notification would be appropriate."
- Researches and analyzes questionable medical dispatch and transport decisions and prepares or presents findings and makes recommendations for improvement.
- The ELO must remain familiar with current EMS legislation and trends within the field of emergency medicine.
- Monitors hospital drop times and takes the appropriate measures to improve unit availability.
- Conducts regular evaluations of operational activities and demonstrates skill in identifying challenges/ concerns and develops plans to resolve issues.
- Assists the Medical Director with the development, training and implementation of technologically related programs and hardware that enhance the effectiveness of the position.
- -Determines the need in which or if an EMS officer is to be dispatched.
- -In conjunction with the on-duty EMS platoon commander approves inter-facility or emergency transports.
- Performs other tasks and duties which may not be specifically listed in the position description but are within the general operational categories and responsibility levels typically associated with the employee's class of work.

In closing the primary role or function of the ELO is mitigating potentially litigious emergency medical situations in which field assets require direction. The ELO is a proactive position in which units are continually polled on availability, location and status but as FEMS grew in size, scope, missions and practices increased a single ELO can no longer effectively manage the position without sacrificing performance measures in other mission critical areas.



Vincent C. Gray  
Mayor

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
D.C. FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT



Kenneth B. Ellerbe  
Fire and EMS Chief

## Memorandum

To: Teddy Kavaleri  
Interim Director, Office of Unified Communications

From: Kenneth B. Ellerbe *KBE*  
Fire and EMS Chief, D.C. Fire and EMS Department

Date: 5/12/2011

Re: Daily Duties of the Fire Liaison Officers (FLO)

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This report is being generated to bring to light the daily duties that the Fire Liaison Officers (FLO) are, and continue to be responsible for.

The FLOs have been assigned to the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) for approximately four years. From their inception until now, these FLO positions have proved over and over again to be an invaluable tool for the Fire and EMS Department as a whole.

Permanently removing these positions from the OUC, would, in a sense, leave the Fire and EMS Department feeling the same way when you leave your cell phone at home. Lost, and you can't wait to get home to see who has called you.

### Listed below are many of the responsibilities of the Fire Liaison Officers:

- Provides iMobile Tech Support, especially after hours and on weekends when the iMobile Tech Support personnel are not on duty.
- Makes notification to the iMobile Tech Support team of any problems found with the system.
- Monitors the iMobile system, and utilizes the iMobile Latency Report. Makes notification when the iMobile system is down, and when the system is down monitors all unit's status to make sure they are in the AQ status when clearing a run so they will be dispatched correctly.
- Monitors the functioning of the CAD system and reports any issues to the CAD team.
- Monitors the unit lineup in the CAD to make sure all units are in the CAD, statused correctly, and will make transfers based upon the amount of available units.

- Assists the Watch Commander in determining which units to transfer.
- Researches unit's travels using the iTracker.
- Receives any phone calls from police agencies when a DCFEMS member is arrested after regular business hours and on weekends. The arrest information is then forwarded to the proper person(s). This information is held in the strictest confidence.
- Monitors the iNetViewer to make sure that it is working properly. Notifies the CAD team if any issues are found.
- Makes notifications to the on call Fleet Maintenance Foreman during the hours that the shop is closed.
- Monitors all calls that are dispatched to make sure they are coded properly and that the correct resources are being sent. Can immediately intervene to get a dispatch corrected/modified to fit the information contained in the notes, and can immediately have additional resources sent if warranted.
- Makes sure that any pertinent information in the notes is passed along to the BFC or pertinent units responding to a call.
- Checks the status of the hydrants for a given area using the Google Earth program on fire responses.
- Assists the BFC on WSTF dispatches in determining the location of available high flow hydrants.
- Monitors the usage of the VRS system on calls where the radio signal may be affected, and advises its usage when needed.
- Assists the Watch Commander in making requests for Mutual Aid resources.
- Performs the radio console patches for Mutual Aid resources, special/major events, and also uses the ACU 1000 to perform patches.
- Notifies the DFC-OPS of any requests for Mutual Aid resources.
- Monitors the VFIRE23 mutual aid channel, and monitors the weekly test on this channel.
- Monitors the DC MA2 inoperability channel, assures the patch between DC MA2 and DC 10-1 is in place, and participates in the weekly DC 10-1 test on this channel.
- Assists the ELOs as needed.
- Manages the reserve unit status in the CAD lineup.
- Sends out all pages: Group 1, Safety/Wellness, Burn Foundation, Canteen/Rehab, NCR Radio Cache, and Fleet Maintenance.
- Makes notifications via phone for any major incidents to the personnel listed on the Significant Event Notification List.
- Receives all requests for resources for VIP details from the United States Secret Service (USSS).
- Notifies the units of details, and notifies the Watch Commander of any details. Monitors resources when details are scheduled to make sure the appropriate resources are available, and if not makes sure replacement units are advised of their being placed on the assignment. Makes all requests to Mutual Aid agencies for VIP detail resources when needed. Provides the access code to the units assigned to details at the Naval Observatory (NOB).

- Receives requests from the Special Operations Division for any High Risk Warrant Details, and assists in managing the assigned resources for these details.
- Along with the ELOs, monitors the out of service EMS units (returning the medic, returning to their local alarm area) to make sure they go in service at the appropriate time.
- Participates in the daily Battalion Conference Call and shares any pertinent information. This also helps the FLO learn of any events which may affect resource levels in advance.
- Attends the 3 roll calls held by the oncoming OUC shifts. Passes along any pertinent information.
- Conducts a drill for the OUC personnel each Friday.
- Assists the ELOs in monitoring the Live MUM program.
- Notifies the Network Operations Center (NOC) of any reports of Information Technology issues.
- Notifies DC WASA of any out of service hydrants or water main breaks reported to Communications.
- Assists the Watch Commander with any responses for a Water Supply Task Force.
- Provides the Public Information Officer (PIO) with timely updates on any incidents.
- Forwards any requests for OUC transcripts/tapes to the appropriate personnel.
- Monitors the Tactical channel of any working incident to monitor radio communications, maintain awareness of the status of the event, and to assist the Incident Commander (IC) in anyway.
- Assists in having units notified and made enroute to the FD Clinic when a member is selected for random drug testing.
- Assists in having units sent to iMobile Tech Support at the PSCC when necessary.
- Monitors to make sure the proper CAD functions are performed by the OUC personnel (i.e.: time stamping Fire under Control, making the BFC in command, etc.).
- Monitors the radio designation of units contacting Communications to make sure that their radio designation matches the unit calling.
- Monitors anytime a reserve portable radio is being used in case that radio transmits a mayday to make sure the correct person who is transmitting the mayday is identified.
- Assists the Watch Commander during any maydays or 10-33s.
- During any maydays or 10-33's, sends out a Group 1 page, makes the appropriate notifications to members on the Significant Event Notification List, and may request to have additional units respond to the scene in the case of a 10-33.
- Documents any dispatch issues and recommends solutions if applicable.
- Has a Radio Channel (0C16) and has a direct phone line (202-373-3712). These serve as direct lines for any FD personnel to the OUC where they can speak to a FD officer.
- Receives notification from WASA of any O.O.S. hydrants and water main breaks, along with the severity of any water main breaks. Maintains awareness of these issues in case of any fire events and how water supply may be affected. Forwards this information to the DFC-OPS and any other operations personnel as needed.

- Assists the Watch Commander in managing resources during times of very high demand. This often occurs during different weather related events.
- Assists the DFC-IT and the BFC-OUC as needed, and can be contacted for many issues handled by them after normal business hours and on weekends.
- Receives the List of Chiefs every morning and provides a copy of the list to the OUC personnel and members of the Senior Staff.
- When the Fire Operations Center is stood up, the FLO works with the personnel staffing the Fire Ops Center to manage the needs of the department during the incident/event.
- The FLO also assists the Fire Ops Center personnel when dispatching for special events is being done by the Fire Ops Center.

**Below is a list of drills that the FLOs have created and conducted with members of the OUC:**

- Alarms and Descriptions
- Building Abandonment and Levels of Staging
- Building Designation and Building Construction
- CISM
- Companies by Battalion and Mutual Aid Operations
- DC Fire and EMS Updated Dispatch Policy
- Emergency Fire Dispatch Parts I and II
- Expanding Incident Dispatch Procedures
- Fire Investigation Unit
- Fire Service Terminology
- Fort Meyer Dispatch Policy
- Mass Casualty Incident
- MAYDAY
- Metro Dispatch Assignments
- Water Supply Task Force Policy and Procedures
- Regional Radio Communications Interoperability and Patching Procedures
- Suspicious Package
- Third Street Tunnel Fire

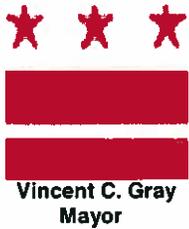
**The FLO is used in the following official Fire/EMS Department Orders and Manuals:**

- ✓ Communications Ops Bulletin 4 HSEMA Notifications Policy.
- ✓ Initial notification to HSEMA from Fire and EMS is accomplished via a Group 1 page; the HSEMA EOC and Operations Managers are included in the Group 1 Page. This will provide rapid but preliminary information about an incident. The Fire Liaison Officer (FLO) will telephone the HSEMA EOC on (202)727-6161 and confirm they have received the initial

Group 1 Page. (The intent of this phone call is to confirm HSEMA EOC is aware of the incident, is receiving the pages and is alerted to monitor the CAD).

- ✓ Fire Operations Center (FOC) Activations and Ready Alerts.
  - o Ready Alerts — The FLO will make initial notification when the Department is placed in a "Ready-Alert" status via Group 1 Page. Once the FOC has been activated, further updates will be provided in the following outline....
  - o Fire Operations Center Activation — The FLO will make initial notification of FOC activation via Group 1 Page. During activation for preparedness planning functions, the FOC Director will provide an update as soon as the FOC planning team is in place and provide regular updates throughout the activation. During all other incidents the FOC will provide reports as needed to support the on scene incident commander and the requirements of the District Response Plan.
- ✓ EMS Operations Bulletin 2 Chemtrek Deployments.
- ✓ Special Order 2007-34

**Attachment 2:  
Response from D.C. Fire and Emergency  
Medical Services Department**



**Government of the District of Columbia  
Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department  
Washington, D.C. 20001**



September 22, 2011

Charles J. Willoughby, Esquire  
Inspector General  
Office of the Inspector General  
717-14<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Fifth Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

**RE: OIG Management Alert Report MAR 11-I-003**

Dear Mr. Willoughby:

Thank you for your Management Alert Report MAR 11-I-003, dated August 10, 2011, regarding Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) personnel physically located at the Unified Communications Center (UCC). Your cover letter requested that FEMS respond to the MAR with a description of actions taken or planned, dates for completion of planned actions, and reasons for any disagreement with the concerns and recommendations presented. This letter constitutes that response.

There are two recommendations contained in the MAR:

- 1. That the Chief of FEMS and the Director of the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) execute a short-term MOU defining roles and responsibilities of FEMS employees and FEMS-OUC employee interactions.**

Previous efforts to draft MOUs with the OUC were not completed. FEMS concurs with the determination that short and long-term MOUs will clarify the duties and responsibilities of the various FEMS employees and programs housed at the UCC. We also agree that periodic review and revision of these MOUs will ensure continued efficiency and accountability. FEMS will work with the OUC to complete this recommendation by October 30, 2011.

2. **“That the Chief of FEMS: (a) immediately assess the justification, cost benefit, and operational benefit of continuing to detail the current number of FEMS employees to OUC; (b) determine which FEMS positions, if any, should continue at OUC; and (c) provide the result of the assessment and any action taken to the City Administrator, the Committee on the Judiciary, and the Inspector General.”**

FEMS will perform an assessment of the justification, cost benefit, and operational benefit of stationing employees at the Unified Communications Center (UCC) and to provide the results of the assessment and any action taken to the identified stakeholders. FEMS will work to complete this assessment by October 30, 2011.

FEMS would like to comment on a number of the points raised in the MAR. FEMS positions located at the UCC are funded operational positions. These positions do not directly cause or affect overtime costs due to operational vacancies. There are four major FEMS programs housed at the UCC: EMS Liaison Officer (ELO); Fire Liaison Officer (FLO); Battalion Chief OUC Liaison; and Quality Assurance (AQUA). These programs were each created at different times and with different missions and objectives. Each program is fully funded and the associated FTEs (17 in total) are contained in the agency’s baseline budget. Each program was also the subject of a rigorous justification/cost-benefit/operational benefit analysis as required by the executive budget review process.

As a general observation, FEMS notes that the MAR does not distinguish the origin or duties of the ELO and the FLO. Since October 1, 2009, the ELOs have managed the District of Columbia’s “No Diversion” program by performing centralized system management of all ambulance transports. ELOs also serve as the Medical Director’s designated single-point-of-contact for hospital operational requests, including closures and emergency transfers. Our ELO program was cited nationally as a best practice in EMS and the District of Columbia has been invited to appear before several prestigious physicians groups, including the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP), to present our procedures for study and implementation by other jurisdictions. The American College of

Surgeons for the NCR Trauma System review recently cited the ELO program as a best practice following a recent site visit. A 2007 study found that DC Fire & EMS units experienced an average hospital drop time of 41.3 minutes, 79% longer than the average of national respondents. That average drop time has now been reduced to less than 36 minutes. We attribute this to the work of our ELOs.

Another core function of ELOs is the management of the Non-Transport Checklist Protocol. This program went into operation on March 19, 2010, and has led to an increase in the ratio of transported patients from 64% to 72% (over 700 additional patients per month). The technical management of this program likewise requires physical location in a secure environment free from distractions, with direct access to the CAD system for adding notes and making unit status updates.

The Fire Liaison Officer (FLO) position has been in existence since 2007. The FLO is a dual role Fire Officer/EMT that is currently at the rank of Sergeant. The FLO is the fire subject matter expert whose responsibilities require continual interface with OUC staff, the general public, other public service agencies and other FEMS units. The FLO is also responsible for monitoring resource allocation, assisting the OUC watch Commander with the transferring of companies to fill service gaps, and coordinating mutual aid requests from neighboring jurisdictions. The FLO is the Department's first point of contact for deployment of resources to Presidential, Vice Presidential and VIP landing and motorcade details. These requests can occur at any time of the day and can change in a moment's notice. The FLO is also the first point of contact to coordinate repair of station printers, computers, alert systems, I/Mobile and portable/mobile radio systems from DCFEMS units. They are also the first point of contact with the Apparatus Officer for vehicle breakdown to coordinate a response by the Fleet Management Division after hours.

The FLO plays a support role to responding Incident Commanders (IC) and responding units during fire Box alarms and working fires. They offer their subject matter expertise with fire hydrant utilization using the Google Hydrant information programs and relays such data to the IC and responding units. They monitor channel 1 and the CAD to ensure the proper units are responding and provide feedback to the OUC watch Commander for any adjustments.

They monitor Centracom radio computer screens monitoring for Emergency Activations from radios on the fire ground and monitor for MAYDAY declarations. They also notify senior FEMS Officers when significant events occur. The FLO can also provide a BLS medical response to incidents that arise within the OCC with ALS level response provided by the ELO.

FEMS medical personnel assigned to the AQUA program listen to tapes of the 911 call takers using the proprietary QA programs of the Medical Priority Dispatch System. They are responsible for scoring the performance of the call taking process and adherence to the medical protocol. Results of individual medical quality assurance reviews and trending reports are provided to the OUC management team so that they can in turn; provide quality continuing education and remediation programs for their employees. FEMS provides this medical Quality Assurance review on the request of the OUC so they can do process performance improvement activities.

Page one of MAR 11-I-003 FEMS lists five bullet points. Although the Department will provide a more detailed response once the cost/benefit analysis is completed on October 30, 2011, we offer the following initial response.

**1) No official written agreement authorizing presence of FEMS employees at the UCC.**

While numerous memoranda and communications exist between FEMS and OUC covering a variety of topics, there is no signed memorandum clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the four major FEMS programs housed at the UCC. FEMS agrees that such a memorandum would add value and will work to complete this task by October 30, 2011.

**2) “FEMS officials did not provide evidence to the OIG of any measurable benefit to either FEMS or OUC operations to justify this large number of employees who have high salaries.”**

Each of the four programs has different objectives and different evaluation criteria. The AQUA program produces regular activity and outcome reports using standardized criteria proprietary to

the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS). These reports can be furnished on request and these reports are provided on a regular basis to the OUC management team so that they can guide training, continuing education and remediation of 911 Call takers. The ELO program has achieved historic reductions in hospital drop time and hospital closure/diversion hours.

OIG's characterizes the number of employees as "large" and the salaries as "high." However, it must be noted that the staffing levels of each programs must be addressed individually. There are only three (3) FEMS employees on duty 24-7 at the UCC: the FLO and the two ELO positions (ELO 1 & ELO 2). The fact that 12 FTEs are necessary to staff three 24-hour positions is a product of the agency platoon structure, which in turn is the product of the collective bargaining process. The salaries of these personnel are set by the D.C. Department of Human Resources and are the same for all members in the respective ranks.

**3) "These employees have been working at OUC while FEMS reports a staffing shortage of over 100 vacancies and OIG-determined overtime costs of almost \$5 million over budget"**

As noted above, the FEMS positions at the UCC are funded positions in the agency baseline budget. They are not of themselves structural drivers of overtime. FEMS has previously reported in great detail to the Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary about the structural causes of overtime at FEMS and its efforts to address them. The FEMS positions at the UCC are programmatic initiatives designed to address critical issues of patient and provider safety, medical quality, operational efficiency, and clinical outcomes. These positions are a direct response to the guidance received from national standards, District law, operational after-action reports, OIG recommendations, the DC medical community, the Mayor's Task Force on EMS, and other internal and external stakeholders. This topic will be addressed in greater depth in our cost/benefit analysis due October 30, 2011.

**4) Their presence reportedly has been a source of friction between OUC and FEMS employees.**

FEMS and OUC management have met on several occasions to address what we believe are isolated reports of friction between OUC and FEMS employees. Relations between FEMS

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personnel and OUC personnel remain highly professional and positive. Co-locating the FEMS employees with OUC employees at the UCC has achieved significant synergies and efficiencies that would not be possible if they were working in remote locations. There are numerous technologic resources that are available within the state of the art OCC building that allow enhanced functionality for data management and sharing. The MOU between FEMS and OUC can also address any specific issues to further mitigate any perceived friction. It will remain the mutual goal of FEMS and OUC management to ensure that their respective personnel maintain expected standards of professional conduct and mutual respect.

- 5) **“An OUC senior official opined that only 5 of the 13 FEMS liaisons may be required to provide support to OUC emergency operations that FEMS officials say is needed.”**

We respectfully would rather not comment on the opinions of others. We will provide more reliable evidence either to support or deny the necessity and extent of our members’ assignments at the OUC.

This concludes our response to our Management Alert Report MAR 11-I-003, FEMS thanks the OIG for its continued efforts to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of District Government operations, and we look forward to addressing and resolving the issues rose in your MAR.

Respectfully,



Kenneth B. Ellerbe  
Fire and EMS Chief