
	GAITHERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT		
	Evacuations Not Involving Bombs		
	GENERAL ORDER	603.7	
Effective Date	08/19/2015	46.1.4	
Authorized by:	Mark P. Sroka CHIEF OF POLICE	SIGNATURE	DATE

I. DEPARTMENT POLICY

The authority for police to deny access and to conduct evacuation operations lies in the Montgomery County Fire Safety Code (Section 22-19), which was officially adopted by the City of Gaithersburg as the Fire Code for the City, on October 1, 1982. This section permits the fire official in charge of an emergency and police officers assisting him or her to control and prohibit the approach to the scene. It also prohibits obstruction of fire department operations and requires obedience of lawful orders issued by police and fire officials.

Section 22-20 authorizes fire officials to order an evacuation of any building or premises and prohibits interference with an evacuation, making a refusal to obey an evacuation order a misdemeanor. In this instance, the *main* concern is the protection of the public through evacuation - not the arrest of those who refuse to evacuate.

II. EVACUATIONS

A. Evaluating Circumstances

1. The decision to forcibly remove someone who refuses to evacuate or to simply bypass that person must be made by the incident commander. Time and available manpower must be considered in such a case.
2. In lieu of a full-scale evacuation, officers and supervisors should be aware that there are circumstances when *in-place sheltering* (emergency sheltering without evacuation) is preferable because of logistics, the nature of the emergency, etc.
 - In-place sheltering may be necessary when a high-risk population is involved (i.e., elderly persons, ill persons, inmates, etc.) or there is no time to evacuate (as when a toxic cloud is moving quickly toward a populated area).

B. First Arriving Officer's Responsibilities

1. The first officer on the scene of an emergency incident with a potential need for evacuation should evaluate the situation for:
 - RESCUE - If an officer can quickly and safely move endangered persons to safety without undue personal hazard, he or she should immediately do so. Once Fire/Rescue personnel are on the scene, rescue will be their responsibility. Officers should then coordinate their efforts with Fire/Rescue.
 - ISOLATE - Order the closure of approaches to the incident so that additional people do not enter the area and become endangered.
 - REPORT - Prior to the arrival of Fire/Rescue, the initial officer should report the presence of hazardous materials, any placards visible, fire involved, or any other information that might prove useful to responding Fire/Rescue personnel.
 - ESTABLISH PERIMETER - An inner and outer perimeter should be established and everyone (members of the media included) will be required to stay beyond the outer perimeter.
 - COMMAND POST - A command post should be established immediately at a safe distance and direction from the building/area evacuated. To ensure that the police and fire/rescue efforts are coordinated, the police and fire command posts should be co-located.

2. If the incident involves a possible gaseous substance, officers must remember that the lack of odor or smell does not mean no danger exists. Many dangerous gases (freon is one) are odorless and colorless. If natural gas is the substance, responding officers, based on the circumstances, should do the following prior to the arrival of Fire/Rescue or the gas company:
 - If the odor of gas is strong, request additional officers and ensure evacuation of persons from any building involved, and any persons in close proximity to the building involved;
 - Do not use radios unless intrinsically safe
 - Secure the area from spectators and through-traffic; and

- Prohibit smoking.
3. Upon the arrival of Fire/Rescue personnel, command of the scene rests with the fire incident commander present and police officers should assist in the evacuation of any area(s) designated by the fire incident commander and/or gas company representative(s).
 4. Ensure that supervisory and command personnel are notified immediately.
 5. Request an alternate radio channel from PSCC for radio traffic, if practical.

III. EVACUATION ASSEMBLY AREAS

A. Safe Distance From Incident

1. If in-place sheltering is not feasible, consideration must be given to a suitable and safe location to which evacuees will be directed *before* an evacuation is conducted.
2. When conducted, an ample number of officers must be assigned to this task to ensure that confusion among evacuees is minimized, and the evacuation is carried out in an orderly and systematic manner.
3. If persons are being evacuated as the result of a hazardous materials incident, evacuees should be directed to a place that provides shelter and is *upwind* from the incident.

B. Special Considerations

1. Officers conducting evacuations or assisting with in-place sheltering must be aware of those evacuees who may need assistance, such as:
 - Mentally or physically challenged persons;
 - Blind or hearing impaired; and
 - Critically ill persons or bedridden persons.
2. A situation common to evacuations is an evacuee's concern for pets. In some cases, an evacuee may refuse to evacuate if they

cannot take their pet. Officers confronted with this situation should advise the incident commander and take direction from him or her accordingly.

- City Animal Control Officers should be contacted for their assistance at or near the scene of the incident.
- If it does not create an immediate threat or hazard, allow the evacuee to take their pet.

IV. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A. Event Report

1. If an area is evacuated by police, an Event Report will be written by the officer assigned the call.

B. Notifications

1. The following notifications will be made in the event of an evacuation:
 - Operations Bureau Commander;
 - MCP Duty Commander (if after-hours); and
 - GPD Public Information Officer and/or MCP Media Section.