



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Office of Audits and Investigations

April 4, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: Health Human Services and Public Safety Committee Members

THRU: Howard W. Stone
Committee Co-Director, HHSPS Committee

FROM: Josh Hamlin
Senior Policy Analyst

RE: April 1, 2019 Agenda Item: NIOSH and SIT Reports – April 15, 2016 Fire/EMS Incident

Background

On April 15, 2016, firefighters and paramedics from the Prince George's County Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department were alerted to respond to 5007 Sharon Road in Temple Hills, Maryland, for a call to check the welfare of a citizen. Shortly after their arrival, crews attempted to force entry into the residence and two members of the Department were struck by gunfire originating from the interior of the home. A 13-year member of the Department died as a result of his gunshot injuries, and a 9-month member of the Morningside Volunteer Fire Department, was shot and critically injured.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducted an external investigation of the incident, and the Fire/EMS Department convened a Safety Investigation Team (SIT) to conduct an internal review. The NIOSH Report was released in October 2018, and the SIT Report in January 2019. Each report contained recommendations to avoid such incidents in the future.

The NIOSH Report includes eight recommendations (beginning on page 13 of the NIOSH Report), of which the first three are identified as "key recommendations" in the Report's Executive Summary. The SIT Report contains 12 recommendations, several of which mirror or are related to the NIOSH recommendations. The SIT recommendations are classified as: (1) "highest priority," which should be considered for immediate action; (3) "intermediate priority," and warranting thorough review after addressing the highest priority recommendations; and (3) "require review."

Specific Recommendations

The eight NIOSH recommendations, along with related recommendations from the SIT Report are as follows:

**14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772
VOICE (301) 952-3431; FAX (301) 780-2097; TDD (301) 925-5167**

1. Fire, EMS, police departments and dispatch agencies should ensure that police are the primary agency initially assigned to “check on the welfare” of occupants and that information regarding weapons in a residence is communicated to the responding agencies. (NIOSH, p. 13) Dispatch procedures for check welfare calls are addressed in Recommendation #8 (*intermediate priority*) on page 61 of the SIT Report: “The Department will review and consider changes in dispatch procedures.”
2. Fire and EMS departments should implement standard operating procedures requiring firefighters and EMS providers to present themselves in uniforms that readily identify them to be emergency responders. (NIOSH, p. 14) The issue of uniforms is addressed in Recommendation #11 (*requires review*) on page 62 of the SIT Report: “The Department should revise General Order 10-10 referencing personnel uniforms and equipment.”
3. Fire, EMS, police departments and dispatch agencies should ensure important responder safety information is requested during the call taking process and that information is transferred into the dispatch system and provided to first responders. (NIOSH, p. 15) See Recommendation #8 (*intermediate priority*) on page 61 of the SIT Report as noted in number 1, above.
4. Fire and EMS departments should ensure that important information regarding an incident (such as weapons in the house) is communicated to individual responding units and provide mobile data terminals (MDT) for reserve units. (NIOSH, p. 16) The issue of improved communication is addressed in Recommendations #10 and #12 on page 62 of the SIT Report. Recommendation #10 (*intermediate priority*): “The Department should revise General Order 03-13 and mandate the carry and use of portable radios by all personnel actively engaged in an incident.” Recommendation #12 (*requires review*): The Department should train personnel on the use of MDC/MDT’s and ensure that they are working properly.
5. Fire departments and authorities having jurisdiction should consider issuing ballistic vests to firefighters and emergency responders that meet, at a minimum, the requirements of the National Institute of Justice Standard – 0101.06, Ballistic Resistance of Body Armor. (NIOSH, p. 16) This recommendation is addressed in Recommendation #3 (*highest priority*) on page 59 of the SIT Report: “Create a pilot program to evaluate the use of Ballistic Vests.”
6. Fire and EMS departments should ensure that accountability is maintained on all incidents. (NIOSH, p. 17) Accountability is also addressed in Recommendation #6 (*highest priority*) on page 60 of the SIT Report: “Improved personnel accountability tracking system.”
7. Fire and EMS departments should consider using field incident technicians for command officers to help ensure an effective unified command post is established. (NIOSH, p. 19)

The issue of unified command is also addressed in Recommendation #4 (*highest priority*) on page 59 of the SIT Report: “Improve command and control of incidents, particularly those that require a multi-agency response.”

8. Fire departments should consider developing and implementing a workplace violence prevention program with standard operating procedures and guidelines that support the workplace violence prevention program. (NIOSH, p. 20)

In addition to the SIT recommendations cross-referenced with NIOSH recommendation above, the SIT Report also included the following recommendations.

Highest priority:

- “Revise General Order 06-19 so that it clearly outlines the appropriate steps to managing an incident requiring forcible entry into an occupancy.” (SIT Report Recommendation #1, p. 58)
- “Enhance existing annual training requirements to include forcible entry tactics, identifying and managing risk, self-defense and de-escalation techniques.” (SIT Report Recommendation #2, p. 58)

Intermediate priority:

- “Improve assistance and counseling services available to Fire/EMS employees/members.” (SIT Report Recommendation #5, p. 60)
- “Update the Fire/EMS Department’s Line of Duty Death General Order.” (SIT Report Recommendation #7, p. 61)
- “Develop and periodically update a database to accurately track all employee/member training and certifications.” (SIT Report Recommendation #1, p. 58)