

Chester County Fire Chiefs' Association Relocate Committee

The committee met on Tuesday 18 December at the Government Services Center, to review the data from the relocate survey, and the historical information provided to us by DES. We randomly selected several approximately 2 month blocks from various points throughout the three years of information. From the historical information, we found that, while there were some calls that went to a second, and occasionally a third company for relocates, over the three years, the number was small. There were also some relocates that, due to scratches, were only in station for a short time before being released. Again there were only a handful of these calls. From this information, we saw no glaring issues.

Brian Garver provided the break down of the statistical information from the survey. There were 38 Fire Companies/Departments surveyed, which resulted in 55 responses. This provided a good cross-section of Chiefs, as well as subordinate Chief Officers, and a couple of past Chiefs. 82% of those who responded indicated they utilize covers or standbys on a regular basis. 55% stated they call for relocates once it has been confirmed that they will have an extended incident, including the Working Fire Dispatch. 40% indicated they have a WFD that automatically recommends a relocate. As for what is requested for a relocate, 54% request only one engine, while 28% request an engine and some type of specialty apparatus. The multi-station Departments have varying requirements, unique to their make up.

Regarding the ability to provide relocates, 58% stated they could fill a relocate assignment 24 hours a day, while 40% could during a 6PM to 6AM window. 56% saw no need to "opt-out" of being dispatched for relocates, 38% would opt-out for a 12 hour period, and 4% would opt-out entirely. As far as sharing or "regionalizing" relocates, supplemented by covers in quarters, 87% were in favor.

As far as unit recommendations, 36% did not any recommendation for stand bys, while 35% recommended the type of apparatus to relocate, utilizing dispatcher discretions to one degree or another. 29% specified certain units to be relocated. Lastly, 67% of the respondents agreed that there should be a point where the dispatcher discontinues dispatching companies for a relocate.

In response to our comments option, we received 31 comments. Some of the recurring points were;

- The ability to volunteer for relocates when a station has a crew on hand.
- More units/personnel in stand by than turned out for the actual call.
- Over using relocates, either calling for them "by reflex", or filling every station involved, regardless of the units responded.
- As with any call these days, ability to cover relocates varies with shift work.

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- Chiefs making an effort to free-up uncommitted units on an incident
- Allowing the dispatcher to look at the “big picture” County-wide, when determining relocates, to avoid stripping areas of coverage.

The committee discussed our findings, the comments, and past experiences. While we saw no need for a drastic change in how relocates are handled, there are some recommendations for consideration.

1. Limiting the number of dispatches for relocates to two. After a second scratch, the dispatcher would advise the OIC of such, and inquire the OIC's pleasure on the assignment.
2. Regionalized or shared relocates. While attempting to cover multiple stations, relocate one or two units to the primary station (or additional stations completely stripped), and covering the mutual aid/lesser committed stations with a company in their own quarters. This could include units made Available On Scene from the primary incident.
3. Relocating specialty units on a case-by-case basis, using the dispatcher's discretion. A limited number of resources can lead to a “domino effect” for relocating specialty units, to maintain coverage

It was also suggested that an informational presentation be made, on the utilization of relocates and covers, their effect on other areas and incidents in the County, and how other incidents affect them.

Respectfully,

Jim Fairweather
John Carbo
Brian Garver
Sam Terry
Joe Watson