

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

BULLETIN NO. 11

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AWARENESS AND REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

1. **SCOPE:** This policy is to govern how the District of Columbia Fire and EMS Department reports suspicious activity, while respecting the rights and privacy of members of the community. It is important to remember that just because someone's speech, beliefs, appearance, or way of life is different, it does not mean that he or she is 'suspicious'.

2. **PURPOSE:** This policy is intended to provide guidance on what type of activities should be reported and how they should be reported. The purpose of reporting these activities is to identify instances of suspicious activities that may be indicators of criminal behavior and/or terrorism. By centralizing and standardizing the reporting process, the Department can be sure that reported observations will be investigated by the proper authorities. Additionally, this policy is meant to ensure that our actions are proper and legal, while respecting the rights of citizens and visitors to the District of Columbia.

3. **TERRORISM AWARENESS:** Terrorists are trained to blend in and assimilate to their surroundings. Most terrorist acts are well organized and well planned. Agencies at all levels of government are now sharing information with each other. They are finding that reports of similar suspicious activities are coming from widely diverse sources in communities across the country. Comparing these reports has enabled law enforcement and intelligence authorities to develop a more complete understanding of the methods and practices used by terrorist organizations.

4. **INDICATORS OF SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES:** Situational awareness is an important aspect of daily activities. Firefighters, EMTs and Paramedics need to be aware of their surroundings and individuals who may be planning a crime or attack. These individuals or groups live in local communities and most likely engage in criminal activities. In an effort to promote and improve the reporting of suspicious incidents, this is a summary of indicators, characteristics, and behaviors that may reveal possible criminal / terrorist activity. Any single indicator described below is not cause for alarm. The totality of circumstances must be considered when making a decision to file a suspicious activity report (SAR). The prompt reporting of suspicious activities may prevent a crime or terrorist attack.

It must also be understood that terrorists will conduct training, surveillance and "dry runs" prior to the commission of a terrorist act. Terrorists conduct surveillance to determine a target's suitability for attack by assessing the capabilities of existing security and discerning weaknesses in the facility. After identifying weaknesses, they plan their attack at the point of greatest vulnerability. Successful surveillance detection efforts require immediate reporting of incidents similar to the following:

Indicators of Possible Criminal / Terrorist Surveillance Include:

- Prolonged or unusual interest in the Department, infrastructure, or security measures. This would include the questioning of members in person, over the telephone, or via the internet.
- Misrepresentation, anyone falsely representing another agency or department. This would include misusing or using false insignias, documents, and/or identification.
- Overly interested in observing Department drills.
- Unusual questions directed at or about Department members.
- Use of cameras or video recorders beyond the interest of tourism. Individuals drawing pictures or taking notes in an area not normally of interest to a tourist or showing unusual interest in or photographing security cameras, guard locations, or watching security reaction drills and procedures.
- Collections of maps, plans, pictures, and/or drawings of potential target locations.
- Unusual behavior; individuals who exhibit suspicious behavior, such as staring or quickly looking away from individuals or vehicles as they enter or leave facilities or parking areas. Not responding to direct salutations or commands. Peering into offices, vehicles, or secured areas.
- Multiple sightings of the same suspicious person, vehicle, or activity, separated by time, distance, or direction. Loitering in or repeatedly traveling through an area.

Indicators of Possible Criminal / Terrorist Activity Include:

- The loss, theft, or diversion of items such as equipment, uniforms, badges/identification, vehicles, or documents from stations or facilities.
- Repeated, suspicious, or 'false alarms' to locations may be evidence of testing response procedures or 'dry runs'. Be aware of people possibly observing / photographing company's activities during responses.
- Unattended bags, backpacks, boxes, or parcels in unusual locations. They may have visible antennas, wiring, batteries, electronic devices, capped pipes, and/or discolored, leaking, or chemical odor.
- Letters or packages with any of the following: excessive postage, excessive weight, lopsided or uneven envelopes with excessive tape or string, no return address, city or state post markings that do not match return address, handwritten or poorly typed address, incorrect addressee titles or only title, misspelling of common words, marked personal/confidential, oily stains, discoloration, or odor.
- Vehicles that appear abandoned or parked for an unusual period of time.
- Delivery trucks and/or trailers parked in unusual locations, out of place in the area, and/or overloaded.

- Vehicles with darkened or temporary covered windows, showing signs of theft (damaged locks, doors, etc.), license plates, markings, or placards that may appear temporary, unusual, or falsified.
 - Locations with unusual or out of place chemicals or materials that emit a strong, unusual or chemical odor.
 - Unusual locations with cameras, bank equipment, documents, scanners, laminators or other document producing equipment.
 - Locations with blueprints, maps, sketching materials, or surveillance equipment (binoculars, night vision equipment, video cameras, etc.).
 - Locations with large amounts of cash, traveler’s checks, money orders, large quantities of drugs, short sections of pipe along with end caps, and/or ammunition, firearms, other weapons.
 - Self-storage locations that yield the discovery of chemicals, weapons, or explosives.
 - Chemical fires, toxic odors, brightly colored stains, or rusted metal fixtures in apartments, hotel/motel rooms, or self-storage units.
 - Terrorists may also employ aggressive surveillance techniques, such as making false phone or written threats or blocking fire department access to a scene.
5. **REPORTING PROCEDURE:** During daily activities, routine assignments, and responses (Automatic Fire Alarms, Medical Locals, Inspection Activities, Service Calls, etc.), members are constantly interacting with the public and may come in contact with actions or materials that may indicate either criminal or terrorist activities in the planning stages. In the event a member discovers any of the above listed or similar situations, it should be reported to the on-duty Operations Deputy Fire Chief at 202-673-3290 and the on-duty Special Operations Battalion Fire Chief (Special Ops BFC) at 202-673-3358. *Information regarding your suspicions should not be transmitted over the radio.* The Special Ops BFC should be raised on the radio and arrangements made for a landline phone call, if a phone call is not possible the Special Ops BFC should be requested to report to the scene. If the situation at the scene poses an immediate hazard, appropriate steps should be taken to mitigate the hazard.

If something seems wrong, out of place, feels “odd”; even if you cannot put a finger on the reason REPORT IT ASAP!

The Special Ops BFC will collect the details from the reporting company or member and make the appropriate notifications to law enforcement authorities. The purpose of the Special Ops BFC involvement is to assure that the information is passed on to the appropriate authorities. The first point of contact for the Special Ops BFC is the Washington Regional Threat Analysis Center, WRTAC, 202-481-3075(day). A completed Suspicious Activity Report form shall be emailed to SAR@DC.GOV.

Company Officers or Members who are not able to contact the on-duty Special Ops BFC will complete the Suspicious Activity Reporting form on line and e-mail it as soon as possible. This form will be found under the F&EMSD S.O. - G.O. - MEMOS icon on the desktop of Department computers. Select the Fire Watch folder and locate the PDF document: SAR Form

FEMS.pdf. Notification to the Special Ops BFC will be made as soon as possible, once they become available. Blank copies of the Suspicious Activity Report form should be carried on apparatus to assist with observing and information capturing.

All members of the Department are encouraged to maintain ‘situational awareness’ and use procedures for both on-duty and off-duty observations.

6. **PRIVACY & RECORD KEEPING:** The privacy of individuals and respect for the inherent freedoms guaranteed in this country require a high degree of caution in how we report and keep records of suspicious activity.

The Following Rules MUST Apply To Suspicious Activity Reporting:

- All submitted Suspicious Activity Report forms will be kept by the Washington Regional Threat Analysis Center in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- Companies will NOT keep copies of submitted Suspicious Activity Report forms.
- Companies will NOT make journal entries regarding details concerning notification to Special Ops BFC of suspicious activities.
- Reporting of activities observed while inside persons homes and businesses should be limited to clear criminal activity and the situations described above.
- In all cases, it is inappropriate to report suspicious activity based solely on a person’s skin color, dress, or religious affiliation. Reported activity MUST be based on a describable observation, behavior, or action.