




**OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
PALM BEACH COUNTY**

INSPECTOR GENERAL NOTIFICATION

Sheryl G. Steckler
Inspector General

Date: March 25, 2013
To: Chief Jeffrey Collins
Palm Beach County Fire Rescue
From: Sheryl G. Steckler 
Inspector General
Subject: Inspector General Notification #2012-0025 WB

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint from an individual who was subsequently granted Whistle-blower (WB) status pursuant to § 112.3188, F.S. and § 2-423(11), Article XII of the Palm Beach County Code of Ordinances. The complainant alleged various incidents of misconduct and safety concerns at the PBCFR Communications Center. Upon the OIG's review of the allegations, it was determined that the matters involve personnel-related issues, and as such no Investigative Report pursuant to § 112.3189(5)(a)(4), F.S. will be issued.

Although no Investigative Report is being issued, this IG Notification is to advise you of information we obtained during our review. The following concerns were expressed during OIG interviews by the Communications Manager, three Communications Supervisors and nine Communicators:

- Communicators and Communications Supervisors described a lack of consistency related to the implementation and enforcement of policies and/or procedures amongst each shift at the Communications center.
 - A Communicator stated that guidance is minimal and it is up to each shift to determine the intent of each policy/procedure and how it is implemented.
 - A Communicator described the implementation of policies and procedures as a "real gray area," and that "each shift seems to have its own set of rules."
 - A Communicator stated that policies and procedures are interpreted differently by both Communicators and their Supervisors, resulting in various disagreements about implementation.

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- A Communicator indicated that the PBCFR Quality Assurance Manager position was deleted two years ago, which has resulted in the absence of a full time employee monitoring dispatch activity to ensure consistent application of policy and procedures.
- Communicators described the absence of readily available policy/procedure manuals. They also described policy/procedure manuals that were either not updated or missing information.
- Communications Supervisors described a lack of support from management regarding disciplinary matters and how disciplinary actions are handled from shift to shift.
- Communicators and a Communications Supervisor interviewed by the OIG expressed frustration with the Computer Aided Dispatch System¹ (CAD) because of repeated malfunctions on a regular basis. Although initial interviews yielded testimony concerning CAD malfunctions, the OIG was subsequently advised by the Communications Manager that within the last month, the source of the reported system crashes was identified. According to the Communications Manager there was an issue with a third party vendor link that was causing map errors; however, the issue has been corrected and CAD is working properly. The Communications Manager also noted that PBCFR has a series of checks and balances in the dispatch office to prevent similar CAD errors, which include address manuals and a procedure² in place for those types of failures.

Based on the information obtained during this review, the following corrective actions are recommended:

1. Ensure policies and procedures are uniformly distributed and enforced.
2. Ensure employees receive appropriate training that not only focuses on the policy and procedure itself, but PBCFR's expectations of each policy or procedure.
3. Continue to monitor CAD and ensure that all components are properly functioning to assist dispatchers in their daily duties.

Please review and notify our office of any corrective action taken by **April 15, 2013**.

¹ CAD is a software system that enhances an agency's method of dispatching emergency services (as well as other services) via computer to handle calls for service as efficiently as possible.

² According to the PBCFR Communications Center Handbook, a procedure is established "in the event that [PBCFR] must initiate manual dispatch, each position has specific duties to guarantee that manual dispatch is done in an effective manner."