City of Milwaukee

Department of Employee Relations

April 12, 2017

To the Honorable
Members of the Finance and Personnel Committee
Milwaukee Common Council
City of Milwaukee

Re: Common Council File # 161727

Background

In light of the tragic death involving a Special Enforcement Inspector from the Department of Neighborhood Services killed in the line of duty on Wednesday March 22nd, Mayor Barrett directed the Department of Employee Relations (DER) to conduct a comprehensive review of departmental policies and practices relevant to City employees required to work in the field. This report summarizes the methodology used to collect data and information to conduct this review, an analysis of the gaps and opportunities identified in conjunction with the review and specific recommendations to be considered by policy makers to address field safety needs and concerns of City employees.

Throughout this process, DER worked primarily with the departments that have significant numbers of employees required to perform field work and activities on a regular basis as summarized below:

Department	# of field staff	Type of positions
Assessor's Office	32	Property appraisers and supervisors
DCD	30	Real estate, planning, commercial revitalization and housing rehabilitation staff
DNS	162	Residential, commercial, construction, trades, and special enforcement inspector
DPW	1,100	Sanitation, forestry, streets, water, parking
Health Department	127	Nurses, social workers, health inspectors (food and lead), environmental specialists
Library	12	Contractors
Total	1,463	

Other departments involved in this review included DOA-ITMD, the Milwaukee Fire Department, and the Milwaukee Police Department. Their participation was critical in identifying internal City resources available to address the needs, priorities, and recommendations included in this report.

Data Collection and Employee Feedback

On Friday March 24th the Department of Employee Relations (DER) held a meeting with key departmental personnel to discuss the Mayor's directive and the process that would be used to complete the review. The agenda for the meeting included a discussion of the needs and priorities of the departments in light of the incident and feedback received based on employee concerns. The discussion also included a preliminary assessment of resources available to address employee concerns and the identification of viable solutions to increase field safety.

Prior to the meeting, departments were asked to submit copies of their Field Safety Policies. At the meeting, departments completed a survey that was designed to audit baseline field safety practices as they existed prior to the incident. The instrument used for the audit and a summary of the findings can be found in Attachment A – *Audit of Field Safety Practices and Summary Findings.*

Direct feedback from field employees was key in completing this review and identifying and addressing all the safety concerns shared by employees. At the March 24th meeting, departments were directed to seek employee feedback regarding their concerns and suggestions to increase personal safety. Departments were encouraged to schedule and hold listening sessions, administer surveys, or coordinate focus groups to discuss the relevant issues and give employees a forum to express their concerns and suggest ways to improve safety. Information collected by each department as a result of this effort is summarized in Attachment B – *Departmental Summary of Field Safety Concerns, Opportunities, and Suggestions.*

On Monday March 27th Mayor Barrett attended a regularly scheduled Labor Management Wellness Prevention Committee meeting in an effort to hear directly from employee representatives about their concerns and priorities.   This committee, which has been in place since 2009, meets regularly and has played a key role in providing guidance and feedback on a number of employee issues pertaining to wellness initiatives and programming. While the committee originally focused solely on wellness, the scope and strategy of the committee's work has expanded to include both healthcare and safety as the City has been moving toward a more holistic model of employee wellbeing. The committee is well versed on employee health, wellness and safety issues and serves as an informational conduit between employees and the City. The feedback and suggestions from participants mirror those included in Attachment B.

A meeting with the City's Chief Information Officer Nancy Olson was held on March 31st to discuss the availability and use of technology to protect employees in the field and to identify emergency communication options available to departments. A meeting with MPD's Command staff was held on April 4th to discuss how MPD could work with city departments to address some of the needs and priorities identified as part of this process. In conjunction with this effort, DER has also held several discussions with the Budget and Management Division in anticipation of the need to identify funding resources to address the short term and long term recommendations included in this report.

Departmental Needs and Priorities
The data regarding needs and priorities and the suggestions received from employees have been reviewed and classified using the following categories:

Policy
Considerations (in blue) -   *Policy Statement Regarding Commitment to Safety*
Protocols for employees to follow to be and feel safe
Roles and Responsibilities of everyone in the Dept
Employee Options when encountering a dangerous situation

Operational
Considerations (in green) -   *The equipment and devices that help make employee safe*
The technology that facilitates communication with/between field employees
The mechanisms that document and track employee field assignments during the day and facilitate the appropriate response in the case of an emergency

Administrative
Considerations (in red) -   *The resources to ensure proper and timely training*
The effective and streamlined data sharing between departments
Protocols that trigger MPD and/or MFD assistance
Availability of support and counseling services when necessary.

The table below summarizes the needs and priorities of the departments based on the data collected and reviewed and categorizes them according to policy, operational, and administrative considerations.

Needs and Priorities	COMMENTS	MHD	DNS	MPL	DPW	Assessor's Office	DCD
Emergency Communication System	Increase ability to communicate and send alerts to employees in the field	X	X	X	X	X	X
Training Situational Awareness and self-protection	At Time of Hire Refresher Training at least annually vs Incidental training Summer interns training	X	X		X	X	X
City Issued Vehicles or Decals for personal vehicles	Employees prefer driving a city vehicle or have an effective way of identifying their vehicle as "in use for city business"	X	X	X	X	X	X
Establish strong relationship with MPD	Crime activity data sharing Training Situational Awareness Escort to critical inspections After hours MPD Support	X	X	X	X	X	X
Map of Safe Places (MPD districts, fire houses, branch libraries, health clinics)	Field employees can use to easily locate safe City locations to complete paperwork or seek protection.	X	X			X	X
Uniforms and other forms of ID for employees, vehicle, equipment	If employees is identified as a City worker he may not become a target	X	X		X	X	X
Formal Buddy System	Need more guidance as to when it is appropriate to ask for assistance	X	X		X	X	X
Peer Support Resources & Grief Counseling	All resources and options need to be made available	X	X	X			
Consistent Field Safety Policy	Need a strong policy with clear lines of authority and responsibility		X		X	X	
City Issued Cell Phone	Employees want a fast and effective way of asking for and receiving help when necessary.		X		X	X	
Flight Plan	A mechanism documenting employees activities for the day and triggers a response when an employee fails to report back to base or home	X	X	X		X	X
Personal alarm or panic button device	Employees want a fast and effective way of asking for and receiving help when necessary.	X	X	X		X	X
Cameras for vehicles	May deter robbery or carjacking attempts.	X	X				
GPS tracking device	To increase the City's ability to know where people are and respond in the case of an emergency.		X			X	
City provided Insurance coverage for property damage to personal vehicle	When damage is the result of employee performing work, the City should reimburse the employee		X				X

This information helps create the foundation for short term recommendations that will increase employee's safety and that may be adopted immediately. Additional recommendations presented in conjunction with this review will require further research and collaboration between departments and may be included in the development and deliberation of the 2018 City Budget.

Field Safety Recommendations – POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. **FIELD SAFETY POLICY**
    All Departments should establish or revisit their Field Safety Policies immediately. Protocols and specific guidelines addressing field safety for employees must be developed, implemented and communicated to employees. Departments should involve workers when considering potential risks and appropriate measures to control them. Critical components of every departmental Field Safety Policy must include:

    *   A policy statement that articulates the department's commitment to employee safety.

    *   Clear delineation and definition of roles and responsibilities for safety (Dept Head, managers and supervisors, safety personnel, and employees)

    *   Documentation of mandatory safety training - at time of hire and annually

    *   Peer Support resources and grief counseling resources available to employees.

    *   Steps for supervisors to follow when an incident is reported by an employee including support options and referrals

    *   Method for gathering ongoing employee feedback pertaining to safety issues and concerns

    The Field Safety Policy should, when appropriate, include clear **procedures and guidelines** addressing:

    a. How employees are expected to report, document, and respond to safety threats and hazardous situations

    b. Guidelines outlining when a "buddy system" should be used based on risk factors

    c. A procedure for arranging for police assistance or escorts when needed based on known risks.

    d. General Safety Guidelines for employees to follow in the field.

    e. A clear protocol authorizing employees to terminate appointment when they feel unsafe without fear of retribution.

    f. Resources identifying safe places in the community (fire houses, police districts, libraries, health clinics) where field employees can seek protection in the case of emergency. See Attachment C – *City of Milwaukee Safe Places*

    g. Options for supervisors to consider when addressing risks: pairing up employees as necessary, securing escort from MPD when appropriate, scheduling appointments at different time, randomly or upon request checking up on employees in the field, or delaying the visit.

    h. Protocols for a "Flight Plan" documenting daily activities of employees in the field.

Field Safety Recommendations - OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. **CITY VEHICLES**
   The majority of the non-DPW positions that are required to do field work require employees to have a personal and properly insured automobile for city business. Employees are reimbursed for mileage according to the Internal Revenue Service reimbursement rate. Many employees have expressed an interest in being able to use a city vehicle to conduct business. The number of unassigned cars in DPW currently available for use by City employees is 12. On average 9 of the 12 vehicles are reserved and used by City personnel conducting city business on a regular basis leaving only 3 vehicles available for field employees. The 2017 Budget includes 7 additional passenger vehicles which will increase the current fleet to 19.

   While making a city vehicle available to all field employees is not possible, the City should consider expanding the DPW Fleet to allow field personnel to use a City vehicle when warranted such as when the interaction with a client or resident is expected to be confrontational based on prior incidents or known hazards and/or when the use of a clearly marked vehicle may serve to deter criminal activity.

   A preliminary assessment of the cost associated with expanding the fleet to 24 vehicles carries an initial fiscal impact of $107,500 and on-going annual costs of $9,300. Expanding the fleet and developing the appropriate protocols to ensure adequate utilization of City vehicles should be considered in conjunction with the 2018 City Budget.

2. **PERSONAL VEHICLES FOR USE ON CITY BUSINESS**
   Many employees indicated that increasing their visibility in the communities they serve may help deter crime. According to DPW a 5 inch diameter decal of the DPW or City seal could be ordered and installed in the inside of a car's rear window. The decals could be easily removed by the owner of the vehicle and reinstalled during working hours. Based on a preliminary estimate by DPW, 500 decals would take 10 to 15 days to produce and would cost approximately $3,000. DER will work with DPW to place the order and issue decals for employees to use when driving their personal vehicles for business purposes.

   In addition, DER will discuss with DPW the availability of safety beacons that can be mounted to the personal vehicles of employees to increase their visibility in the field.

3. **UNIFORMS/CLOTHING ITEMS TO HELP IDENTIFY WORKERS IN THE FIELD**
   Based on the premise that employees who are identified as city workers doing city business may be less likely to be a target of a criminal behavior, some employees are requesting a re-examination of the uniform policies within each department.

   DER will reach out to departments to identify uniform or clothing items needs and preferences and create a mechanism for the purchase, funding and issuance of such items. Preliminary data received indicates that costs associated with some general items are as follows: $10 for safety vests, $45 for jackets with City logo, $100 for coats with City logo.

4. **PERSONAL ALARM DEVICES**
   Many employees have indicated a desire to have a personal alarm device to use in the field. There are many options available. The devices vary significantly in scope and cost. For example, a simple personal alarm device similar to a key chain may be given to field employees to use in the case of an emergency. This device produces an extremely loud sound (usually 120 decibels or more) that will draw immediate attention during an emergency and may serve to deter an attacker while providing an alert for immediate help. Costs of such items have been found to be in the $7.99 to $25.00 range. DER will work with the departments to determine the right number of devices to be purchased based on needs.

More sophisticated panic alarm devices rely on technology via a panic alarm app in a smart phone. Such apps come with expanded functionality including a server that tracks audio and location data necessary to get help, the location of the employee's last assignment, a 24/7 central station that monitors alarms and notifies responders, a system that identifies workers who have failed to check out safely, and the ability to coordinate support and response services when there is an emergency. Such systems also provide safety check timers, intended location and alerts when an employee fails to respond to safety verification calls.

Additional research and analysis is recommended to determine the viability of a panic alarm app to be used per the description above. The decision to invest in a more sophisticated emergency communication system should be done in conjunction with the 2018 budget.

5. **MOBILE PHONES**
A review of current policies and protocols within City Departments reveals that some employees are performing field work without a viable way to communicate with others. Employees may be performing field work without a personal phone or other means to call for assistance when needed. All field employees should have a mobile phone available for use when performing field work. When a personal mobile phone is not available, a City issued flip phone shall be distributed for use. Every mobile phone should be programmed with the department's emergency contact information as well as other emergency numbers.

Further research and analysis of the City's policy requiring and issuing mobile phones is needed and should be done in conjunction with the 2018 City Budget and other emergency communication recommendations included in this report.

6. **IMPLEMENTATION OF "FLIGHT PLAN" PROTOCOL**
Every department with employees performing field work should establish a clear mechanism to record and track employees' planned activities and stops for the day. A "flight plan" protocol enables departments to know every employee's anticipated work schedule and stops on any given day and would be of great assistance in locating or tracking the employee when he/she fails to report at a predetermined time or location or at the end of the day.

A flight plan protocol should be implemented requiring employees to document, report and communicate a change to the daily schedule and "call in" or "report" when all field assignments are completed and the employees is heading back to "base" or home. As an additional safety precaution, such protocol should include an alert or flag component when an employee has not reported back to base at the end of the day per established protocol.

Note: ITMD's Unified Call Center may be available to handle call-in procedures at the end of the day.

7. **PROTOCOLS FOR WORKING WITH MPD**
Many of the field employees believe that their departments should develop a stronger partnership with MPD to facilitate the exchange of data and strategies to minimize risks and respond to emergencies. MPD has committed to working with each department to assess the unique needs of their employees based on their operations and to develop formal protocols and strategies that will help those departments keep the employees safe and better prepared to respond to an emergency.

8. **MAP OF SAFE PLACES**
One of the recommended best practices when employees are preparing to do field work is to be fully aware of safe places in the community where they can go to seek protection or where they can park when they need to complete paper work at the end of the day. A map depicting all the "safe places" and their corresponding addresses will be developed and distributed to all field employees.

Field Safety Recommendations – ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

1. **UTILIZATION OF THE CITY'S E-NOTIFY PLATFORM AND CITY WATCH FOR ANALYSIS OF SAFETY RISKS AND IN RESPONSE TO EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**
One area of opportunity identified in conjunction with this review includes the need to train departments on the availability and use of technology to receive information on activities occurring in the neighborhoods that may compromise the safety of employees. For example, to the extent that the City's E-Notify platform notifies the public and City agencies of activities happening in the neighborhoods that may create risks for our employees, such alerts and notifications should be used by managers and supervisors to make deployment decisions. Such decisions may include the time of day to conduct the work, the number of workers assigned, when the use of a city vehicle is recommended, the need to request MPD escort, etc….

   In addition, departments should work with ITMD to assess the feasibility of using City Watch to enhance worker protections in the field. City Watch is a robo-dialer that allows departments to record a message, select a list of phone numbers (such as inspectors or nurses working in a particular area of the City) and alerts employees of an emergency occurring near them with a recommendation to take necessary precautions or leave the area.

2. **TRAINING**
The City needs to develop and implement a formal training program for field employees on how to recognize a dangerous situation and how to respond accordingly. DER is working with MPD personnel to facilitate Situational Awareness training for all field employees in the next couple of months. The training for DPW, DCD, DNS, Assessor's Office, Health Department, and the Library will be scheduled in a way to minimize disruption to operations and ensure maximum employee participation. Training will also be recorded and made available to new employees.

   A separate training for supervisors will also be coordinated by DER on how to respond to an employee's safety concern including the required documentation, the resources available to help the employee deal with and address the concern, the availability of EAP referrals and other support services.

   In addition to Situational Awareness training, the City should invest in a Learning Management Application for safety training including:
   - First Aid
   - Self Defense
   - Recognizing and Responding to Threats
   - Safety when Conducting Home visits
   - Using Verbal de-escalation to defuse a threat of aggression or violence
   - Emergency Response Procedures

   Based on preliminary research on different online learning systems, the annual cost for this type of application would be approximately $50,000 to $60,000 for 3,000 users. The annual costs may vary depending on the type of learning system and the total number of users.

3. **SHARING INCIDENT DATA BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS**
Given that many of our field employees are visiting the same neighborhoods, employees are interested in a mechanism to share data across departments documenting incidents in the field. Such data can assist an employee to better prepare for a visit or inspection. For example, a Public Health Nurse visiting a home may hear shots while driving in a neighborhood for a scheduled home visit or an inspector may observe some disruptive behavior while conducting an inspection. This data should be recorded and documented so that departmental staff members or other City agencies performing work in the same area can be alerted of those incidents and be better prepared to respond.

The type of data to be recorded, documented and tracked should be sensitive to legal and other administrative considerations. The data produced would be made available to other departments conducting business in the area and with MPD. The shared data can assist managers and supervisors to make resource allocation decisions or determine the appropriate time for scheduling visits, inspections or interactions with the client or in that neighborhood.

The City should look at establishing the appropriate protocols to document and share such incident data and work with ITMD to identify and develop a streamlined and effective way of collecting, tracking, and sharing critical incident data across departments.

4. **GRIEF COUNSELING AND SUPPORT**
The City should establish comprehensive counseling and debriefing services for workers who experience or witness assaults and other violent incidents. Such resources shall identify and document DER, MPD and MFD available services for emotional support. Training resources shall also be identified and made available to enable employees to cope with unexpected circumstances involving violence and aggression. DER will work with the appropriate agencies to identify those resources.

5. **EMPLOYEE SAFETY ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK**
Employee's perceptions and attitudes regarding safety at work should be an on-going priority for departments. A department's ability to review risk assessments periodically and/or when there is a significant change in working practice ensures compliance with the City's responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of employees at work.

A survey tool should be developed and administered to collect this information on a regular basis. Supervisors should regularly talk to employees about their work and ask for input on possible solutions to hazardous situations and incidents. Departments should be held accountable for following up on issues and concerns raised from these interactions. In addition, the Wellness and Prevention Labor Management Committee can serve as another mechanism to assist with ongoing feedback from and communication to employees.

Next Steps
The review of safety policies and practices conducted by DER has identified a number of opportunities and recommendations to address the safety needs and priorities of our field employees. Specific recommendations are being made regarding policy matters, resources to make employees be and feel safe in the field, technology that enables communication with/between field employees, protocols to track field assignments and ensure an appropriate response when there is an emergency, data sharing enhancements that provide important information to managers when making deployment decisions, resources to ensure proper and timely training, and the coordination and availability of support and counseling services when necessary.

DER is currently working with the appropriate departments to coordinate the implementation of many of the recommendations made to address the safety needs and priorities including those dealing with policies and operational resources. Further discussions will follow regarding the more complex recommendations as they will require further analysis and review in conjunction with the 2018 budget process. Departments will be asked to include any additional safety related items as part of the 2018 budget proposal.

I encourage this Committee to request a follow up report detailing the policy, operational, and administrative changes made in response to this review and the recommendations made. I look forward to discussing this report with you at the Special Finance and Personnel Committee meeting of April 13th.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Monteagudo
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