

<b>PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT MANUAL OF GENERAL ORDERS</b>			
<b>General Order: 17.04</b>	<b>Effective: 11/11/2019</b>	<b>Supersedes: NEW</b>	<b>Number of Pages: 4</b>
<b>PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE: PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS</b>			

The Police Department utilizes different social media platforms and the community notification system to disseminate information quickly to the public. The following guidelines apply to the use of these platforms.

**A. Social Media Platforms**

1. Social media has proven to be an effective tool for law enforcement to quickly inform the community about police activity or requests for assistance in locating missing or wanted persons. The Public Information Office (PIO) shall retain the primary responsibility over the management of the Police Department’s official social media platforms, unless the responsibility of said platform has been previously designated to another unit.
2. The Police Department will utilize social media in cases where there is a public safety threat. This can include, but is not limited to: active violence situations, dangerous fugitives on the loose, evacuations, civil disturbances, etc.
3. The ranking on-scene supervisor will ensure PIO is updated on developments in the case to ensure the latest, pertinent information is posted to social media.
4. Social media shall be used in cases of Missing Endangered Persons and Amber Alert activations, in addition to, email notifications to the news media.
5. Additional social media guidance can be found in General Order 17.05.

**B. Everbridge: PWC Alerts (Community Notification System)**

1. The Police Department has the ability, in extreme cases of public safety, to send out notifications via the Everbridge public emergency notification system, referred to as “PWC Alerts”. PIO staff are trained to use this system and should be contacted within a reasonable timeframe for activation **to the public**. When the system is activated, the PIO will alert the on-duty communications supervisor and command staff.
2. Messages sent via the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System must comply with all applicable State and Federal rules, with guidance from the County’s Office of Emergency Management. The Police Department has the ability to use the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system. These messages are currently limited to 90 characters, can be broadcasted to a geographic area or countywide to mobile devices, similar to an “Amber Alert”, and may also be received in adjoining counties near county borders.

3. In conjunction with the County’s Office of Emergency Management, four categories were established in which PWC Alerts can be activated. The categories are deemed as either an alert or a notification. Alerts will be sent to any resident who has an Everbridge account and should only be reserved for extreme cases involving life-threatening emergencies in which residents need to take immediate action. Notifications are intended for informational purposes and can only be sent to residents who have opted-in to receive those notifications through their respective Everbridge account.
  - a. Active Violence -- **Alert**
  - b. Law Enforcement Emergency -- **Alert**
  - c. Critical Missing Person -- **Alert**
  - d. Law Enforcement Activity – **Notification**
4. Messages sent using “Opt-Out” data should be restricted to imminent or actual life-threatening emergencies and considerations should be made to the time of day when determining if it’s appropriate to use “opt-out” data for a notification. This data is “opt-out” because the citizen did not request their information be used for the purposes of receiving an emergency notification, but rather it was obtained by the County for use in life-threatening emergencies. “Opt-out” data includes white and yellow page listings and all subscribers signed up through Everbridge. While the determination of whether a matter is a life-threatening emergency is a discretionary decision, the following criteria may help determine the need to send an alert to opt-out citizen contact data:
  - a. **Severity:** Is there a significant threat to one or more individual’s life safety?
  - b. **Public Protection:** Is there a need for members of the public to take a protective action in order to reduce loss of life?
  - c. **Warning:** Will providing warning information assist members of the public in making the decision to take proper and prudent actions to increase safety?
  - d. **Timing:** Does the situation require immediate public knowledge in order to avoid adverse impact to life or safety?
  - e. **Geographic Area:** Is the situation limited to a defined geographic area? Is the message capable of being focused on this area?
5. For active violence situations and law enforcement emergencies, there must be an **active** life-threatening, public-safety threat in which the Police Department is requesting residents in the affected area to **take immediate action** (i.e. shelter-in-place, lockdown, evacuate, etc.). In these situations, the following criteria should be provided in brief, direct statements;
  - a. Hazard: type of threat/danger from preselected menu.

- b. Incident Location Description: common, plain-language description of the area where the police activity is occurring (i.e. Potomac Mills, Featherstone neighborhood).
- c. Incident Area: [not-required] defined geolocation using the alert system map to designate the affected area of the police activity.
- d. Incident Location: [not-required] address or street name/hundred block of where the police activity is occurring.
- e. Situation: brief details on what is occurring at the location.
- f. Protective Actions: clear, concise directions to residents in the affected area to protect themselves.
- g. Update Info: [not-required] where the public can go to get additional details or expect further information (i.e. social media).
- h. Sending Agency: PWC Police from preselected menu.
- i. Date & Time: automatically designated in system.
- j. Message sample;

**HAZARD:** Active Violence

**LOCATION:** Potomac Mills

PD responding for reports of an active shooter near the food court. Not confirmed.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:** Leave the area if possible or shelter-in-place.

**For additional information and updates:** Follow Facebook & Twitter @PWCPolice

**Sent by:** PWC Police on 06-03-2019 at 13:00:00

- 6. For critical missing persons, the decision to activate PWC Alerts will be considered on a case-by-case basis given the weather conditions, person's age, and other factors such as time lapse, time of day, and any mental/medical/physical impairments the person may have. General Order 17.02, H.2., should be consulted regarding information for alert criteria.
- 7. For law enforcement activity situations, considerations should be given for the type of activity and resources on scene. Considerations can include, but are not limited to: K-9, helicopter, perimeters, etc. These are situations in which there is **no active** public safety threat and are more for informational purposes.
- 8. The PIO supervisor, the ranking supervisor on scene, Emergency Management Duty Officer, and the on-call Command Staff member should be consulted, if reasonable, before an alert is sent via the Wireless Alert System.

9. When an alert or notification is sent, PIO will notify the communications supervisor as soon as reasonably possible to ensure they are prepared to assist residents who call in with questions or information. Additional notifications should be sent to command staff, Emergency Management staff, and other County staff as deemed appropriate for the situation.