


Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service FIRE CHIEF'S GENERAL ORDER

FCGO: 22-05

August 16, 2022

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TO: All MCFRS Personnel

FROM: Fire Chief Scott E. Goldstein 

SUBJECT: Pets, Service Animals and Working Dogs in MCFRS Stations, Facilities, and Vehicles

This FCGO rescinds and replaces FCGO 14-02, *Domestic Animals and Working Dogs in MCFRS Stations, Facilities, and Vehicles*

MCFRS recognizes that there are situations where animals are required to occupy MCFRS stations, facilities, and vehicles to support an operational program area or comply with federal or state laws and regulations. This Fire Chief's General Order establishes the definitions and policies for several situations where animals may be in MCFRS stations, facilities, and vehicles.

The following definitions will be applicable to this FCGO:

Pet – defined as a domesticated animal, such as a dog, cat, bird, or other animal that is kept for pleasure rather than for commercial purposes.

Service Animal – defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as an animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. **Service animals are not pets.** The work or task a service animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the handler's disability. **Note that service animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.**

Working Dog – defined as a dog sanctioned by MCFRS and trained for use in fire/rescue tasks such search and rescue, accelerant detection, human remains detection, or for Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)/peer support.

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The following policies are established by this FCGO:

1. **Pets** are prohibited from all MCFRS stations, facilities, and vehicles after 2300 hrs
 - While in MCFRS stations, facilities, or vehicles - **pets must be leashed or in a kennel.**
 - Pets may be brought to MCFRS stations, facilities, or vehicles – **only for brief visits.**
 - Pets are prohibited in MCFRS station or facilities kitchen, locker rooms, and sleeping areas.
 - Personnel must obtain the approval of the career/volunteer station officer or facility manager **before** a pet enters the station or facility.
 - Personnel who bring pets to MCFRS station, facility, or vehicle are responsible for cleaning up after the pet, **including both** the interior and exterior areas of the station.
 - If any personnel assigned to the MCFRS station, facility, or vehicle are allergic to the pet, the pet is **prohibited** from entering the station, facility, or vehicle.
 - Pets are not allowed on or in moving MCFRS vehicles except during community outreach events, as approved by the unit officer, and assigned support and staff vehicles.

2. Personnel who have received an accommodation for a **Service Animal** under the ADA must comply with the parameters of their specific accommodation, to include the following:
 - Use of the service animal is prohibited during response to, return from, or on the scene of any emergency or non-emergency incident.
 - The service animal is prohibited from riding in any MCFRS fire/rescue/EMS apparatus, but allowed to ride in MCFRS staff vehicles, provided that the service dog is secured via appropriate vehicle crate/carrier.
 - Service animals must have a designated kennel area in the station or facility that must be climate controlled.
 - The service animal must be under direct control of its handler when not in the kennel area.
 - Service animals are prohibited from MCFRS station or facility kitchens, locker rooms, and sleeping areas, except when under direct control of its handler.
 - The service animal handler is responsible for cleaning up after their service animal, including both the interior and exterior areas of the station or facility.
 - If any personnel assigned to the MCFRS station or facility are allergic to the

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service animal, the station officer or facility manager must be notified immediately so alternative arrangements can be made.

3. MCFRS does not recognize a “service animal in training” as a service animal under this FCGO. The ADA does not cover “service animals in training” and the provisions of Maryland law, Human Services Article, governing admittance of “service animals in training” are inapplicable to a local government, such as Montgomery County. Therefore, “service animals in training” are treated the same as pets and prohibited from MCFRS stations, facilities, and vehicles.
4. Personnel who handle **Working Dogs** must follow these parameters:
 - Working dogs must be secured via appropriate vehicle crate/carrier while on or in an MCFRS vehicle.
 - Working dogs must have a designated kennel area in the station or facility that must be climate controlled.
 - Working dogs are prohibited in MCFRS station or facility kitchens, locker rooms, and sleeping areas.
 - The working dog handler is responsible for cleaning up after their dog, including both the interior and exterior areas of the station or facility.
 - If any personnel assigned to the MCFRS station or facility are allergic to the working dog, the station officer or facility manager must be notified immediately so alternative arrangements can be made.

For further questions or clarification, contact the Administrative Services Section Chief.