



TARRANT COUNTY JUVENILE SERVICES

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To: Juvenile Board Review Committee

From: Bennie Medlin, Director Juvenile Services

Date: March 4, 2021

Subj: Summary of Winter Storm Events Involving Juvenile Detention Service

This memo is a follow-up to the memo I sent you on February 17, 2021, advising you of the power outages and subsequent events which occurred at the Juvenile Detention Center due to the winter storm.

On Friday, February 12, 2021, at 12:00pm, I received an update from the Tarrant County Department of Emergency Management about the impending winter storm expected to occur between February 12 – 16, 2021, and shared this information with all Juvenile Services Employees. After receiving this information, the Detention Management Team met to prepare for the winter weather event. They knew the weather conditions may impede travel for staff commuting to and from work and create other operational concerns, and they took the following action:

- The Food Services staff prepared meals ahead of time that could be easily prepared and served to everyone in the facility;
- The Facilities Management Team had been on-site that day with HVAC vendors to check these systems and make repairs as needed;
- The Medical staff was designated to be on call to address medical concerns as needed; EMS was to be contacted to provide advance medical care in the event of a medical emergency and driving conditions were unsafe;
- The Mental Health staff was designated to assess and re-assess residents who were identified as moderate risk for suicide and those who require other MH intervention;
- Staff were instructed to evenly distribute linen and blankets to all residents;
- It was anticipated that regular programming may be impacted. Staff were advised to be prepared to adjust the program schedule for smaller groups of residents depending on staff coverage;
- Staff were advised to stay safe with regards to their commute to/from work, and that additional staff would be in the facility to provide coverage if needed to endure the weather event.

- Staff were also advised to prepare for a longer stay in the facility by bringing additional clothing and hygiene items.

The following is a timeline of events:

Monday, February 15, 2021, at approximately 2:00am, the center began to experience intermittent rolling power outages which occurred until approximately 07:45am.

Monday, February 15, 2021, at approximately 2:45am, Facilities Management personnel was notified of the power outage.

Monday, February 15, 2021, at approximately 7:45am, the power went off and did not come back on.

- When we lost power to the detention center, the backup emergency generators came on immediately, however, one of the generators did not engage. The power outage impacted facility operations including lighting, IT infrastructure, telephones, the facility HVAC system, facility surveillance cameras, hot water heaters and laundry.

Monday, February 15, 2021, there were 98 residents (12 Females/82 Males) in the center at the time of the outage, and one female resident on medical quarantine due to a positive Covid-19 diagnosis.

Monday, February 15, 2021, at approximately 9:00am Facilities Management personnel reported to the facility and determined that the second generator did not engage. A vendor was called to service the unit and determined it needed a part (heater block) that was not readily available, therefore the generator could not be repaired that day.

Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at approximately 12:30pm, the second generator was repaired. Upon repair, more safety lighting was provided throughout the facility and some telephones were restored. However, the HVAC system, two surveillance monitors at the main console control area, hot water heaters and laundry area were still not operational.

Tuesday, February 16, 2021, (time unknown) Facilities Management personnel communicated with Oncor utility distribution and provider to determine the duration of the power outage to the facility. According to Oncor, the facility is a Critical Care Facility; however, it is categorized with hotels and could not project when power would be restored.

Wednesday, February 17, 2021, there were 105 residents (19 females, 86 males), with one female on medical quarantine due to Covid-19, and approximately 16 residents on medical quarantine due to Covid-19 intake protocol.

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at approximately 2:50 am, power to the facility was fully restored. The HVAC system to the 56-bed area (back dayroom area) became operational as well as lighting throughout the facility, IT infrastructure, telephones, hot water heaters and laundry. The two surveillance monitors at the main console control area did not return online. The HVAC systems to E, F, G and H pods (64 beds) became operational but was not heating these areas. Facilities Management and contract vendors worked throughout the day to restore heating in these areas, and were able to restore heating in all but one housing unit.

Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at approximately 5:00am, facility personnel detected a major water leak from the ceiling of H-Pod housing unit, specifically water leaks were detected in H-05 and H-06 resident rooms. The 16 residents assigned to the housing area were immediately evacuated from the housing unit and assigned to other areas within the facility. Facility personnel immediately notified Facilities Management personnel of this incident.

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 facilities management reported to the center around 9:00am, and called a plumber. The water leak was repaired later the same day.

Thursday, February 18, 2021, there were 99 residents (19 females, 80 males), with one female on medical quarantine due to Covid-19, and approximately 17 residents on medical quarantine due to Covid-19 intake protocol.

Thursday, February 18, 2021, Judge Kim agreed to released approximately 8 youth to their parents and transfer 8 youth to the Tarrant County Jail to reduce the detention population.

Thursday, February 18, 2021, The County Administrator arranged for MedStar Emergency Services to test all youth who were quarantined at the center due to Covid-19 precaution. A total of (14) fourteen residents were tested on Thursday, and (3) residents were tested the following day and none of the test were positive. All residents tested were removed from quarantine status and placed in the general population.

Thursday, February 18, 2021 during the PM hours, all HVAC systems were fully restored and heating properly.

Thursday, February 18, 2021, during the late evening, the entire complex began to experience low water pressure. Facilities management was notified of the problem.

Friday, February 19, 2021 and Saturday, February 20, 2021, the City of Fort Worth repaired several water line breaks in the community around the facility. The water pressure to center began to slowly increase throughout Friday evening.

Saturday, February 20, 2021 at approximately 3:00pm, the water pressure was restored to the entire complex.

Saturday, February 20, 2021, another water leak in E-Pod was detected, specifically a sprinkler pipe burst in a resident room and repaired that day.

Saturday, February 20, 2021 at approximately 3:00pm, all systems (i.e. HVAC, Water, Hot Water, Telephones, Washers and Dryers) were fully operational.

Monday, February 22, 2021 at approximately 10:00am, another sprinkler system water leak was detected outside near the playground area in a storage closet. Facilities Management determined that it was a sprinkler head. The sprinkler head was replaced and the sprinkler system was fully restored at approximately 3:45 pm.

Resident Welfare and Safety:

Because of the lack of proper heating throughout the facility, facility personnel provided residents additional blankets in their assigned rooms. As an exception to the rule, residents remained fully clothed with their jackets while secured in their assigned rooms to provide additional warmth.

Meal times for residents stayed on schedule and residents were provided hot meals and additional snacks throughout the power outage event. Because the hot water heaters were not operational, residents performed daily hygiene by cleaning with a hand towel (wash off) and changing their undergarments and socks daily. Laundry was impacted by the power outage; therefore, the residents did not change uniforms daily unless soiled.

Facility housekeeping continued by allowing residents the opportunity to clean, disinfect and sweep their assigned rooms and living units to ensure proper sanitary practices.

Residents could not make telephone calls to their respective parents/guardians because of the power outage. Telephone calls resumed on Wednesday, February 17th once power and telephones were fully restored.

Residents were allowed time outside their assigned rooms even with limited lighting by moving in groups to classrooms, dayroom areas and cafeteria with facility personnel providing required supervision and monitoring.

Residents were informed of the power outage impacting facility operations and the reasons for modifications. They received frequent updates regarding weather conditions and facility operations which impacted regular programming. Residents were understanding and very well-behaved resulting in the facility not experiencing any major incidents involving residents.

The facility was appropriately staffed with management personnel on site throughout the event, and senior managers spending the night on certain days. The residents remained safe and received daily hot meals and other critical services during power outage. There were no major incidents or critical medical emergencies during the period power outages. All residents were given the opportunity to contact their parents when the power was restored.

There have been no other facility related systems breaks or malfunctions since the power, heating and water were fully restored on Saturday, February 20, 2021. This was an unprecedented winter event as reflected by the extended periods of single degree temperatures, power outages and watermain breaks across the county. There are always lessons learned when we experience rare and unprecedented events, and the follow are areas needed follow-up:

Maintenance of Generators:

The generators failed to work properly and power important life safety systems. By all accounts (i.e. Juvenile Services and Facilities Management Personnel) it was presumed that the backup power generators powered the HVAC, hot heaters and lighting in the detention, and these systems failed when we lost power to the facility. It is important to note, these systems are managed and maintained by Tarrant County Facilities Management, and they have already started the process of retaining an engineering company to determine what is needed for the generators to fully operate these systems during power outages. This is an area where assistance from the Juvenile Board is requested.

Medical Services:

We did not have medical staff on site during the winter storm event. There are two Registered Nurses and one Medical Technician providing medical services for the juvenile detention. There was only one full-time RN position filled at the time of the winter storm due to the recent resignation of the second RN. The department has had a long history of difficulty recruiting and retaining RNs due to the competitive medical market in the Fort Worth/Dallas area, and this continues to be a concern. The Director has been in ongoing discussions with the County Administrator to explore the feasibility JPS providing medical services for the Juvenile Detention Center in the same way they provide these services for the adult jail. I have had recent discussions with the County Administrator regarding the need for these discussions to move forward during the FY 2022 County Budget Request. This is an area where assistance from the Juvenile Board is requested.

Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP)

The Department has developed a Continuity of Operations (COOP) in coordination with the County Administrators Office and County IT (I can provide a copy of this plan if needed). The plan is designed to ensure mission essential functions of the department

will continue during a wide range of emergencies. The plan lists the Tarrant County Jail as the alternative site for juvenile services operations, including housing, food services, medical and intake services for the detention center. We did not activate the COOP plan in preparation for the winter storm event because we did not anticipate a need to evacuate the detention center during the winter storm event.

We did not anticipate a convergence of the various systems and facility related breakdown that were caused by the winter storm, therefore, we did not anticipate the need to secure a facility to relocate the residents during the winter storm. It should be noted that identifying an alternative site for juvenile housing in an emergency has been an ongoing challenge, because there are no facilities in Tarrant County suitable for this purpose.

Juvenile Services entered an MOU with the TC Sheriff Office in 2012 (I can provide a copy of the MOU if needed), for the adult jail on Belknap to serve as the alternative housing should there be a need to evacuate the detention center. The agreement was established under a prior Sheriff and Juvenile Director, and discussions have been ongoing to update the agreement with the current Sheriff Office Administration. Changes in jail administration personnel and focus on the Covid-19 pandemic has delayed these discussions. We have contacted jail administrators to resume these discussions and expect to convene a meeting in the coming weeks.

Facilities Management Being On-Site During Emergency Situations:

Tarrant County Facilities Management is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of County building and facilities. The facilities management team assigned to Juvenile Services is responsible for multiple buildings in the area. There were facilities management personnel on-call but none on-site during the winter storm. This contributed to delays in identifying and responding the various systems breakdowns and malfunctions. It would be prudent to have someone from facilities management on-site during a severe weather event rather than have someone on call. This will speed up the response time when critical life safety systems go down. Additionally, Juvenile Services Administration is working with Facilities Management to ensure Oncor establishes the detention center as a priority facility like hospitals and jails when power loss is anticipated.

Depopulating the Detention Center:

A key component to our emergency response plan is population management. Having the ability to reduce the population as much as is reasonably possible until the emergency conditions subside is an important factor to consider going forward. The detention center is currently staffed for 88 residents. We entered the winter storm weekend with 98 residents in the facility, and the population increased to 105 residents as referrals continued during the height of the storm. Judge Kim was gracious enough to authorize the release of several residents to their parents and transfer others to the Tarrant County Jail, which relieved the detention population at a critical time during the weather event. However, in consideration of the potential travel and other conditions during a weather

emergencies we should work more closely with the juvenile court to depopulate the center as much as possible prior to the event.

- This report is intended to provide a summary and timeline of significant events that occurred during the winter storm event. It also written to identify critical issues that need to be addressed to improve the department's emergency preparedness and to avoid similar circumstances in the future.