

Montgomery County police file for 88 days of overtime after storm

By Rachel Baye, Staff Writer, The Washington Examiner. Published: July 10, 2012

Montgomery County police worked 88 days' worth of overtime hours in the aftermath of the storm that wreaked havoc across the region on June 29.

The 2,111.57 hours earned police \$102,843.69 in overtime pay and 310 "comp hours."

Many of the hours were spent directing traffic when traffic lights lost power.

"In Montgomery County, there's 800 intersections that have traffic signals. At one point, we had over half of them out," Police Chief Tom Manger said at a community meeting in Silver Spring.

The department needed all hands on deck to supplement the roughly 50 state troopers who came to help out, he said. "We had detectives, we had people that hadn't been in a uniform in 10 years [directing traffic]."

Other police officers worked extra hours coordinating with other agencies in the county and elsewhere, making sure police districts were not left exposed to routine crimes and generally helping out around the county "with chain saws and other specialized equipment," according to county spokesman Patrick Lacefield.

The police overtime was first reported by the Gazette.

Employees in the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service earned \$30,000 for 500 hours of overtime after the storm, according to Fire Chief Richard Bowers. The earnings went to staff in the 911 Emergency Call Center, people working with the police to coordinate with other agencies and operational staff, like firefighters and medics.

The overtime costs add to the list of expenses incurred as a result of the storm.

Residents and restaurants tossed out spoiled food and businesses closed. Many residents racked up hotel bills since they didn't have electricity or -- in the case of some -- running water at home. County Council President Roger Berliner, D-Bethesda, estimated that the financial burden could be upwards of \$1 billion.

The storm also had an opportunity cost, Berliner said. "We have emails from people that basically say, 'We're leaving, and I would never recommend my business expanding in Montgomery County,' [because of the outages]."

Still, shelling out for overtime is a familiar concept in Montgomery County.

In fiscal 2012, which ended June 30, the police department had an overtime budget of \$10.3 million and the Fire and Rescue Service had \$10.7 million for overtime. In each of the last three years, police staff have worked roughly 200,000 to 225,000 overtime hours, while fire department staff have worked roughly 280,000 to 370,000 overtime hours.

The Fire and Rescue Service also overspent its fiscal 2011 overtime budget by \$6.5 million, while the police department exceeded its overtime budget by just under \$300,000, according to CountyStat, the county's data analysis arm.