Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole
Acting Chairman John Tuttle

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the **Green** sheet

OMC staff work 24/7 to help provide public safety

Parole agents refer to this unit as their lifeline.

And unless you know what you're looking for in Central Office, you'll walk right past their office as they quietly communicate with people from around the state and sometimes the world…24/7.

The Operations Monitoring Center (OMC), or the 24/7 Unit as they are more commonly known, runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The OMC was established in May 1999.

If a parolee is arrested, 24/7 is notified. A GPS alert goes off, an offender needs to be moved from a CCC quickly, a citizen has information about a parole violation – 24/7 is called.

"Without a 24/7 Operation Center, there would be no one at the Board to do what we do," said supervisor Lisa Terrell. "I am not tooting our horn, but according to the Pennsylvania State Police and the FBI, someone must be available 24/7 to respond to CLEAN inquiries."

Additionally, staff must be available for operational needs to issue detainers, monitor GPS systems and assist in emergencies.

"Our roles as an operator have expanded three-fold since I began working here nine years ago," Terrell said.

The 24/7 Unit is a communications hub. Information comes from the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network (CLEAN) and National Criminal Information Check (NCIC) transactions, PA Justice Network (JNET) arrest notifications, community corrections center absconders, electronic monitoring with global positioning system (GPS) and phone calls from the agency's 800 hotline. OMC staff also communicate with agents in the field using two-way radios.

Staff has grown from six operators to nine. The current staff includes Juanita Bradshaw, Shemeika Chandler, Charlene Collier, Angie Connacher, Courtney Douden, Tammy Kobler, Dori Wertheimer and Zachary Taylor, with one vacancy due to the retirement of Scott Fetterhoff after working for six years in the OMC.

The following is an overview of the major OMC responsibilities provided by Fetterhoff before he retired and Wertheimer

CLEAN/NCIC Inquiries

CLEAN and NCIC contain criminal history information, protection from abuse orders, driver's license and other services to assist law enforcement. Emphasizing the importance of these calls, Fetterhoff stated, "These inquiries are a very high priority. They cover any absconder anywhere in the United States and Puerto Rico. Often when the calls come in, a police officer has

the offender pulled over at the side of the road and they need the information quickly. We respond in 10 minutes or under."

PBPP 800 Number

"After 5 pm and on weekends and holidays, all district and sub offices forward their phones to the 800 number for 24/7 coverage," Fetterhoff said. "We handle all types of calls from offenders and the general public who want to speak with their agent, police departments and other law enforcement officials."

Community Correction Centers (CCCs/CCFs)

"Calls from the CCCs/CCFs can be wide-ranging," Fetterhoff explained. "The call could be requesting an expedited removal of an offender from the center. Other calls can be for transport to or from the CCC/CCF or we are contacted if someone is in absconder status."

PA Justice Network (JNET) Arrest Notifications

JNET allows authorized users to access critical public safety and criminal justice information at the federal, state and local level. According to Fetterhoff, when the notifications come in they are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Global Positioning System (GPS) Monitoring

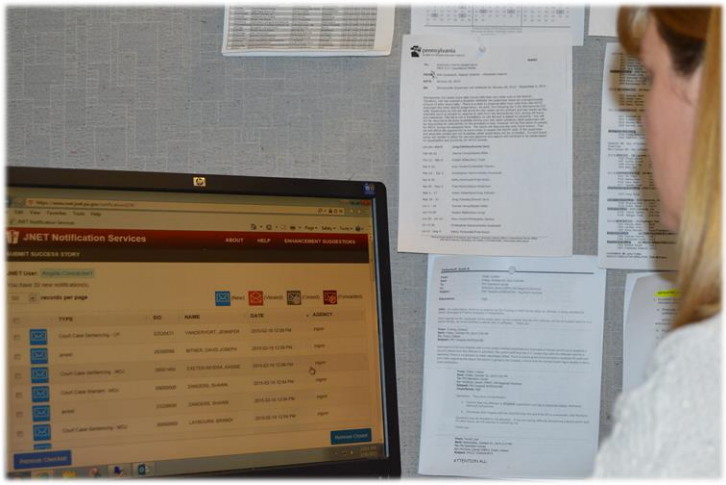
"This is a satellite-based monitoring system," Fetterhoff said. "Every time we get an alert, we must forward that alert to the assigned agent so they can follow up with the offender. We still monitor certain alerts. For instance, Strap Alerts. If not bought back into compliance we must enter them into NCIC."

Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (SAVIN) and State Intermediate Punishment (SIP) Cases

SAVIN allows victims and others to be notified of certain actions regarding the offender's case. If the 24/7 Unit receives information about an offender and a SAVIN notification is attached, they must contact the Office of Victim Advocate who will make the proper notification to the victim.

Radios

"Pennsylvania has some very extreme, rural areas where offenders are on supervision," Fetterhoff said. "If there is no cell phone coverage, agents use radios to maintain



Angie Connacher checks on an offender in JNET.

contact with us. Surprisingly, we get about 20-25 radio calls per week."

Offender Transports

"Agents are required to call 24/7 by phone and/or radio in certain instances when they are transporting offenders to advise us when they are starting and ending a transport, the to and from destination, the mileage driven and how long it took for the transport," said Fetterhoff.

General Phone Inquiries

"Frequently throughout the day, 24/7 receives phone calls from law enforcement officials across the state and country," Wertheimer stated. "The officials are requesting information on either a current or past parolee who is being investigated for another crime. We are able to share with law enforcement who the offender's agent is/was, which district office supervised the offender, when the Board closed the case, sentence information, aliases and other relevant information. This information is always greatly appreciated."

Emergencies, Delays/Closings and Holidays

Each of the above duties are almost always performed at the Board's Central Office. However, there have been times when the OMC relocated because of various emergencies such as flooding from the Susquehanna River. In these types of situations, Fetterhoff explained what happens next.

"We grab our personal notebooks that have all of our contact information that we use on a daily basis. We take the radios, the chargers and forward all of our phones to

the emergency center which is located in a room at the Department of Corrections central office on Technology Parkway in Mechanicsburg.

“We head over there where computers are waiting for us.”

While the work they perform day in and day out is serious and extremely vital to the Board’s public safety mission, there have, however, been moments of levity during their work days.

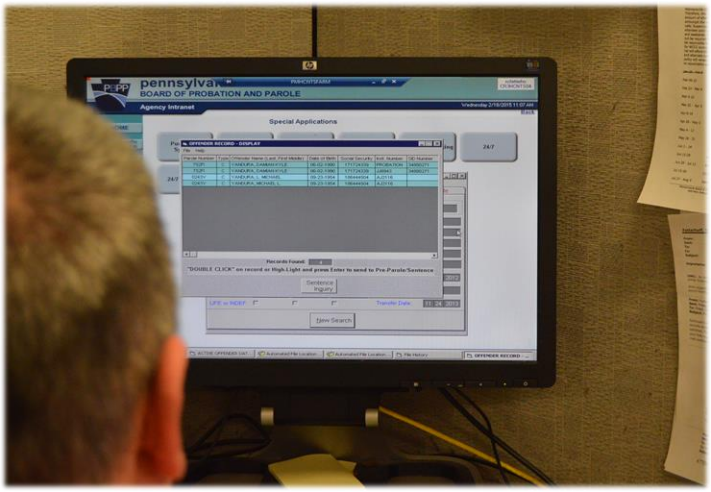
Connacher recalls a handful of them.

“In the middle of a late shift, an offender prank dialed the OMC to tell the monitor that his agent was ugly,” Connacher recalled. “There was another offender who called us from his CCC and told us that the food was terrible and he called to get a hamburger delivered.

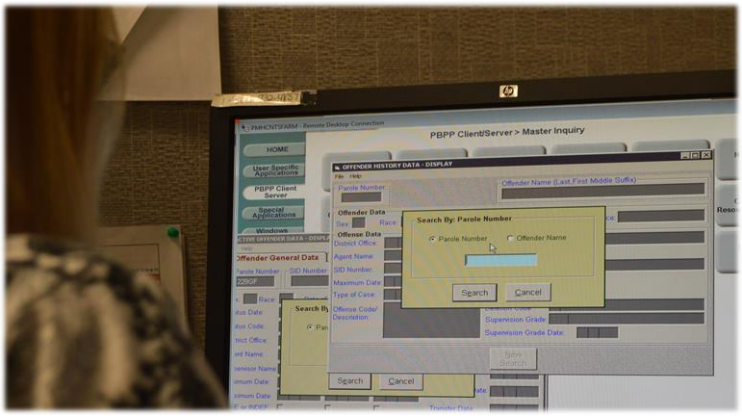
“Another offender committed a robbery with his EM bracelet on, but one of the most memorable happened when agents went to arrest an offender at his house. Our system here at CO said he was at his residence, yet after the agents searched all through the house they couldn’t find him. His EM bracelet never moved and agents continued to search. They finally found the offender hiding under the porch.”

OMC sees definite patterns throughout the year.

“Summer is always higher in activity for us because the weather is nice and the offenders are out and inter-acting with others, including the police,” Fetterhoff explained. “The months of May through late October to



Scott Fetterhoff checks case information following a police call.



Dori Wertheimer pulls together information on an offender in a parole violator center.

early November are our busiest time in the unit. And the busiest shift is the 4 pm to midnight time period.”

When describing their work, Fetterhoff, Connacher and Wertheimer use common characteristics.

“Time management is key,” Fetterhoff said. “There are days when you blink and your shift is over.”

“The same thing doesn’t happen every day,” Wertheimer stated. “You have to know how to do a lot of things in here and you have to know how to do them quickly.”

“Variety is an understatement,” Connacher said. “I came in here four and a half years ago and I can’t believe time has gone so quickly. The one thing I wish I could change is that we often don’t get the end result of a lot of the cases we respond to and some of them I really wish we would.”

The end result for the Board is that the OMC is, indeed, needed 24/7 to help achieve its public safety mission.