


Ocean City Fire Department  
**FIRE CHIEF'S INFORMATION BULLETIN**  
**23-01**

<b>DATE</b>	January 12, 2023
<b>FROM</b>	Fire Chief Richard R. Bowers, Jr. 
<b>SUBJECT</b>	PEER Support K-9 Therapy Dog

The Ocean City Fire Department has endorsed using a certified therapy dog in a pilot program. Max will be assigned to Fire Headquarters and work directly under the Community / Department Engagement Officer and the PEER Support Team.

**Purpose**

Hero Dogs, Inc. will provide a fully trained and certified facility/therapy dog and lifetime training for all current and future designated handlers. The certified canine selected for the Ocean City Fire Department is MAX. Max is a 20-month-old, black Labrador Retriever, neutered male.

Max will visit fire stations, city office buildings, training, community events, fire prevention, debriefings, meetings, volunteer duty crew assignments, and other details as assigned by his handler. This will provide a therapeutic outlet for personnel in the station from the stresses and traumas experienced while on duty.

**Designated handlers**

Community / Department Engagement Officer Ryan Whittington and PEER Support Team, and Coordinator Eric Olson have seen the program developed from the start and will be the two primary handlers.

Secondary handlers are welcome to express interest in the attached survey.

**Areas of access for Max**

Max will have access to the administrative and living quarters when on-duty personnel are in the station, with the following exceptions:

1. Max will be confined to his crate when all personnel are out of the station, as trained.
2. The apparatus bay will be off-limits unless the canine is on lead with a handler.
3. The kitchen and dining areas will be off-limits during mealtimes. The canine will be confined to his crate during these periods.
4. The outside grounds and parking lots will be off-limits unless on-lead with a handler.
5. Bathrooms will be off-limits at all times.
6. The medical supply room will be off-limits at all times.

### Daily Care

The authority and responsibility for the daily care of Max will rest with the designated and certified handlers trained by Hero Dogs, Inc.

1. Their handlers will feed the canine, and the canine will not be fed table scrapes, food other than the supplied dog food, or treats not approved by the handler.
2. Bathroom breaks for the canine will be the handler's responsibility and those whom the handler has trained on the shift. The on-duty designated handler will ensure that the canine has appropriate bathroom breaks throughout the day.
3. The on-duty designated handler shall ensure that all solid waste from the canine is disposed of appropriately and in a sanitary manner.

### Veterinary Care

A licensed and certified Veterinarian will handle the primary veterinary care and necessary grooming of the canines.

Private sponsors and donors will provide all necessary vaccinations and possible future medications.

If the canine needs immediate or emergency medical care due to sickness or injury, the Berlin Animal Hospital will be utilized.

The address for **Berlin Animal Hospital** is:

10302 Old Ocean City Road  
Berlin, Maryland 21811  
Phone: 410-641-1841

**EMERGENCY**

If after hours, Max will be taken to:

**Pets ER Veterinary Office**

402 Punkin Court  
Salisbury, Maryland 21804  
Phone: 410-543-8400

Through an anonymous private donor, Max has an emergency health insurance policy for emergency coverage through Embrace Pet Insurance.

### Supplies

1. Private sponsors and donors will provide all approved dog food and treats.
2. Sponsors and donors shall provide all necessary leads, leashes, crates, harnesses, and collars.
3. All other ancillary supplies, such as waste bags, shall be provided by private sponsors and donors.

## Expectations

1. Max is trained and certified to provide comfort and emotional support to all individuals he comes in contact with, both within the department and with civilian visitors. Clinical evidence has shown that the presence of a therapy dog in a given environment can reduce anxiety, stress, and blood pressure for populations experiencing trauma. Therapy dogs are used extensively in courthouses across the country for this very purpose with trauma victims.
2. Max shall not be permitted on the furniture in the station (i.e., Couches and beds). This is to reduce the likelihood of contaminating the fabrics with allergens.
3. Max shall not be allowed onto any fire apparatus unless on lead and accompanied by a designated handler.
4. Max shall not be allowed to ride in any department vehicles unless proper safety restraint is utilized, accompanied by a designated handler, the unit is out of service, and approved by the Officer in Charge.

In the instance of fill-in personnel being assigned to the station on detail or overtime with pet allergies, Max shall not have free access to the living quarters but shall be kept away.

