

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 27, 2016

TO: William Stowe, CEO and General Manager

FROM: Ted Corrigan, Chief Operating Officer
Amy Kahler, Director of Customer Service

SUBJECT: General Office Security, Reception, and Hours

Background

In today’s culture, discussion about security abounds—cyber security, personal security, business security—in response to real or perceived threats we experience as a society. Violent acts including shootings and stabbings are in the news on almost a daily basis. A number of entities including entities in the infrastructure and utility sectors are choosing to enhance security in an effort to protect their employees, their customers, and their assets. In recent months, incidents have occurred that indicate our employees’ personal safety is at risk as we fulfill our daily responsibilities of serving the general public. Based on their interactions and experiences, Des Moines Water Works’ (“DMWW”) front-line employees who directly serve walk-in customers have signaled the time has come to consider strengthening security at our general office. We agree.

On Point Security Group

Because Des Moines Water Works provides a critical service to the community, the utility has strengthened security for our operational areas in recent years, most notably at our Fleur Drive Operations Center. For years, the utility had contracted non-armed security guards to secure the treatment plant. On January 1, 2014, DMWW began contracting with On Point Security Group (“On Point”) to provide around-the-clock armed guard services at the Fleur Drive Operations Center. We have been pleased with On Point’s performance over the last three years. The professionalism of their guards and their depth of knowledge related to security have made them a valuable partner in protecting our critical assets from threats, both known or unknown. Based on their positive performance, in 2016, we decided to expand their scope of service to include after-hours rounds in Water Works Park and at a number of our remote facilities. That expansion in scope allowed us to operate with two Park Police Officers following a recent retirement, saving significant labor expense.

In 2017, as part of our ongoing emphasis on safety and security, Des Moines Water Works will again be broadening our scope of services with On Point to include providing armed guards at the general office building during regular business hours. The guard assigned to this post will be stationed behind the front desk directly inside the general office main entrance, and the payment cashier who currently resides in that position will move to the adjacent customer station. While the primary function of the guard is to serve as a deterrent for escalated situations and to be available to respond in situations where customers are being verbally or physically threatening, the guard will also perform routine procedures typical of a security check-in desk, such as logging visitors in/out, monitoring security cameras, routing non-customer related phone calls, etc. It is important to note that work responsibilities are not being taken away from staff represented by the collective bargaining agreement; rather, security procedures are being added and strengthened for visitors to the general office such that all employees feel safe as they perform their daily jobs.

Front line customer service staff and union leadership have provided input and have indicated their appreciation for DMWW's plan to add a security presence in the general office. While all agree it is unfortunate that this is considered necessary, it is a positive and proactive way to maintain a safe working environment for our employees.

Costs and Timing

The addition of an armed security guard at the front desk will cost approximately \$57,000 annually. The guard is tentatively scheduled to begin January 30, 2017, and their first couple of days will include an orientation to our office environment and training on the other security-related tasks they will be performing.

Business Hours

For years, DMWW's office business hours for general customer service inquiries have been 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (with emergency assistance available 24/7), comprising a 10-hour business day. In order to accommodate a 10-hour day, the customer service team is divided into shifts: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. The only time all representatives are available is from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. when both shifts are in the office.

In the process of evaluating security for the general office, customer service leadership evaluated the appropriateness of these business hours. This analysis was two-fold: 1) gaining an understanding of what other utilities are doing, and 2) studying the impacts changing hours would have to customers in terms of phone hold times and accessibility.

Benchmarks - What Other Utilities are Doing

Staff queried other utilities throughout the metro and state. We did not find another example of a utility who offers a 10-hour business day. Most utilities offer general office customer service 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., although a few are open 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. or 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Impacts to Customers - Phone Statistics and Accessibility

DMWW phone statistics were collected and reviewed, and walk-in traffic patterns and trends were identified. Data shows daily customer call volume is steady from 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. at

about 34 calls per half-hour increment, but call volume consistently decreases by at least 50% the last 30 minutes of the day (usually 15 calls or less). Walk-in traffic also decreases during this timeframe, during which time there are usually 4 – 5 customer service representatives available to serve customers.

Customer Service leadership modeled what could occur to phone hold times throughout the day if the business day were truncated at 5:00 p.m. and employee work shifts adjusted to provide more coverage earlier in the day when phone volumes are heaviest.

It is estimated DMWW could reduce hold times by approximately 20% if business hours are changed to 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., supported by a 3-shift structure: of 7:30 a.m.– 4:00 p.m. (4 employees); 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (1 employee); and 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (4 employees). The modeling shows DMWW's average hold time could be reduced from its current 60 seconds to about 45 seconds. While shortening the business day by 30 minutes does affect the few who would have otherwise called or visited in that last 30 minutes, the change will improve the level of service to a greater volume of customers who will experience reduced call hold times throughout the day.

Staff believes reducing customer service hours by 30 minutes will improve customer experience during times when volumes are consistently higher, and notes a schedule of 7:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. still offers at least 30 minutes outside of the typical 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. day, so customers who work will still have the opportunity to visit or call the office prior to an 8:00 a.m. start to their day.

This change in customer service hours will begin January 9, 2017. All directly impacted employees were presented with the idea of a change in customer service hours at an early stage in the evaluation process, and their ideas and thoughts were solicited and incorporated into the decision. Customer communications have been, and will continue to be made to ensure customers are given ample notice for this change. Examples of customer communications are: notice in the customer newsletter, website announcement, statement messages, signage on the door, hold messages while customers are in the phone queue, lobby TV monitor, etc.

Conclusion

Staff believes the security and business hour changes discussed above are positive changes for utility operations, customers, and employees as the utility begins a new year in 2017. These changes will be closely monitored to ensure smooth transitions for employees and customers.