



ROUTINE COURT SECURITY PROCEDURES

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GENERAL

Security awareness by all Court Security Officers (CSOs) is the key to providing a dignified and secure environment within the New Hampshire Court System. Regardless of the type of court, good security practices will ultimately result in a better understanding of potential security risks and to enable personnel to deal effectively with these situations.

OBJECTIVE

To provide security guidance for CSOs to use when conducting routine court activities.

PRE-ASSIGNMENT EQUIPMENT INSPECTION

Prior to the start of each assignment, CSOs shall inspect themselves and the other assigned CSOs to ensure that everyone is equipped with the necessary equipment required of CSOs. These inspections shall occur between CSOs simultaneously and in an area out of view from the public and staff. CSOs are required to have the following equipment items on their person prior to the start of their assignment:

1. Badge

The badge shall be the badge and nametag issued by the Administrative Office of the Courts and shall be worn on the left breast pocket of the CSOs blazer. The badge shall not be altered in any way. No badges from any other agency are allowed to be worn while conducting the duties of a CSO.

2. Firearm

The firearm shall be the firearm that the CSO qualified with during annual firearms qualification, shall have the safety engaged when holstered, and shall be clean and in functioning condition.

3. Holster

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The holster shall have a level II or higher security rating (a safety strap or locking mechanism) to ensure the firearm is secured in the holster and will not fall out during an incident involving physical response.

4. Magazine / Duty Ammunition

Magazines shall be clean and in functioning condition. Duty ammunition shall be department issued ammunition and shall be kept clean.

5. OC Spray with Holster

OC Spray shall be department issued, a full canister, and shaken each day before the assignment begins.

6. Handcuffs with Key

Handcuffs shall be clean and in functioning condition. CSOs shall have a handcuff key to accompany the handcuffs.

7. Radio and Earpiece

Radios shall be department issued and shall be able to transmit and receive signals. The battery shall be able to hold a charge for the entire assignment. The earpiece shall connect into the radio and the CSO shall be able to transmit and receive radio messages. Earpieces shall be kept clean and in functioning order.

COURT SECURITY OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Daily security checks are the first line approach to achieving a secure court facility. CSOs shall conduct security checks at the beginning and end of the work day, even if court is not in session. The checks should consist of an internal inspection spot check of the court to ensure that the integrity of the facility is maintained. The actual conduct of the check will vary from court to court. Attached is an outline to assist CSOs in formulating a list of critical areas to check each day.

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In order to establish the desired level of security in the courtroom, CSOs must be constantly on the alert for acts of violence and spontaneous disruptions, such as emotional outbursts, and be able to respond in a positive manner to any emergency. As a general rule, the Clerk of Court, together with the CSO should review the entire docket to identify potentially disruptive hearings and take the necessary precautions to reduce or eliminate any such activity. Once court is in session, it is essential that both the courtroom clerk and the CSO have a non-verbal means of communication. This can be accomplished by using simple pre-arranged hand signals that will alert the CSO to possible trouble situations. It is the responsibility of the CSO to protect all court participants and to assist in the prevention of the escape of prisoners. These responsibilities continue until court has adjourned and all spectators and defendants have left the courtroom. CSOs shall be alert and exercise caution for any disruptions when defendant(s) are paying fines during and after court sessions.

When all non-court personnel have departed the court area, the CSO should examine the entire courtroom for possible damage or suspicious items left behind. After a thorough check of the courtroom has been completed, it shall be locked until further activity is planned.

ASSIGNMENTS

CSOs will work different assignments throughout the day in each courthouse. The following is a list of those assignments and their general duties:

Security Screening: In order to ensure the security of all court facilities and to protect those individuals who use these facilities, security-screening operations using x-ray machines (in select locations), walk-through and hand-held magnetometers (metal detectors) shall be conducted to deter, detect and prevent weapons and contraband from entering the courthouse. Those duties include:

- Be welcoming to all persons entering the courthouse.
- CSOs shall calm those persons who may be nervous, afraid, hostile, angry, or aggressive. In those cases, the CSO assigned to security screening shall alert the other CSOs of individuals whose conduct or demeanor may suggest being a security risk.

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- To counter fatigue and complacency, CSOs shall rotate accordingly (if possible).

Building Floater: The building floater position is primarily responsible for conducting interior and exterior patrols of the courthouse building and grounds. Particular attention shall be paid to the areas just outside of the courthouse entrance where weapons or contraband could be thrown by an individual attempting to hide the item(s) from being discovered by CSOs during the security screening process.

Building floaters shall constantly remain in motion patrolling the building and grounds unless they engage in the following:

- Provide routine information to users of the court.
- Respond to disturbances in the courthouse or on courthouse grounds.
- Assist the CSOs responsible for security screening during times where there may be a large influx of the public entering the courthouse (typically first thing in the morning and in the afternoon prior to the start of the afternoon court session.
- Serve as an additional CSO in a courtroom where there may be a high volume of people or where there is risk for an emotional or violent incident.
- Provide relief breaks to CSOs performing security screening and courtroom security.

Courtroom Security: The courtroom CSO's primary responsibility is to ensure that judges, staff, lawyers, litigants, witnesses, and members of the public are safe and free from physical or psychological intimidation. Generally, CSOs remain in the courtroom during all court proceedings unless asked by the judge to conduct business outside of the courtroom. In that case, CSOs shall not leave the courtroom until he/she assesses that there is no security risk present during the time the CSO leaves the courtroom. Before a CSO leaves the courtroom, he/she shall radio a message to the security screening CSO that he/she is stepping away from the courtroom and also notify any law enforcement officer(s) in the courtroom of your departure (if possible). Other duties include:

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- Maintain order and decorum within in the courtroom. CSOs must be able to analyze potential disruptive situations and react in a positive manner.
- Provide security for the judge, clerk, prisoners, witnesses, and the public.
- Take appropriate action in disruptive situations.
- Ensure adherence to court guidelines regarding noise and food.

REPORTING

Any breach of security that takes place during the conduct of court activities must be reported to the Security Manager.

NOTE

These procedures are general in nature. Clerks of Court and CSOs are encouraged to review and expand upon them to ensure the courthouse is safe.

DAILY SECURITY CHECK OUTLINE

MORNING INSPECTION

1. Deactivate alarms.
2. Walk through the facility to see if anything has been disturbed.
3. Examine courtrooms, judge's chambers, clerk's office, bathrooms, records repositories, utility rooms, conference rooms and holding areas for suspicious packages or articles.*
4. Examine all windows and exit doors for tampering.
5. Check vault/safe (where appropriate) for possible tampering. This procedure should also apply when a locked cash drawer is in use. Look for any signs of forced entry.

*NOTE: Some court facilities are used in the evenings by town/city/county officials to hold meetings. It is during these periods of time that a person(s) could place a bomb or other

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harmful object in the facility. If a suspicious package or article is discovered, DO NOT HANDLE IT. Contact the supporting police agency/dispatch center immediately.

DAILY INSPECTION

Whenever possible, CSOs should conduct interior and exterior patrols of the courthouse building and grounds. When conducting interior patrols, CSOs shall look for suspicious items or potentially disruptive persons. When conducting exterior patrols, CSOs shall inspect the parking lot and grounds for any weapons or contraband that an individual may have discarded in order to successfully pass security screening. CSOs who are assigned alone to a courthouse on a non-court session day may conduct an inspection of the front entrance area while maintaining vigilance in case an individual seeks to gain entry into the courthouse.

EVENING INSPECTION

1. Ensure the vault, safe (where appropriate), or cash drawer is locked. Administrative Office of the Courts' policy is that no more than \$500 cash will be maintained in the court. If any court has more than the stated amount by the end of the day, a bank deposit must be made. The clerk of court will ask the CSO deliver the deposit to the bank.
2. Clear the facility of all non-court individuals. If there are individuals left in the courthouse after closing whose business has not yet concluded, they will be allowed to finish their business. CSOs are expected to stay on duty until the last member of the public leaves the courthouse. CSOs will then direct them to the exit.
3. Conduct a walk-through of the facility to ensure that: (1) all windows and exit doors are locked; (2) all secured areas are locked; (3) all lights are off; and (4) no suspicious packages or articles were left in the facility.
4. Activate alarms (where appropriate unless there is staff remaining in the courthouse).

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REVISIONS

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2	Assignment and Pre-Assignment Equipment Inspection added	AOC DIRECTOR	3/3/2016

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