

## [Maryland Emergency Management Agency – MEMA] FY20 Annual Report



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### FY20 Highlights

- The State Emergency Operations Center Operated and continues to coordinate State activities for COVID-19, the longest response in MEMA history.
- The Maryland Joint Operations Center served as the receiving point for numerous hotlines developed during the pandemic and continues to do so.
- The Communications & Outreach team coordinated and operated the COVID-19 Joint Information Center for over 100 operational periods.
- MEMA provided program assistance, and financial reviews to support the OOC's (Opioid Operational Command Center) response to the Office of Legislative Audits fiscal compliance audit in Dec. 2019.
- *The following information was provided to MEMA by the OOC:*
  - Published the state's annual *Inter-Agency Opioid Coordination Plan*, which outlines the goals, strategies, and objectives that guide Maryland's response to the substance use crisis.
  - Published quarterly reports to provide updates on the state of the substance use crisis in Maryland and key metrics on substance-related fatalities and statewide response efforts.
  - Coordinated the work of 24 jurisdictional Opioid Intervention Teams to identify and implement substance use programs that best serve each local community in the state.
  - Distributed approximately \$10M in grant funding for substance use-related projects to each local jurisdiction and dozens of community organizations across the state.
  - Hosted the Best Practices Conference in Feb. 2020 to convene professionals from across the behavioral health field to collaborate on solutions for the substance use crisis in Maryland.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, MEMA Liaison Officers' assistance to local emergency management offices throughout the State, included covering shifts in some local EOC's due to staffing shortages at the local level.
- MEMA's "Grants Team" telephoned Grant "sub-recipients" during COVID-19, which added a friendly customer service component, supplemented by email reminders to grants recipients to ensure that requirements were timely met.
- The Maryland Business Operations Center and MEMA non-governmental services team provided information to stakeholders, coordinated conference calls, and bulk donations for over 100 operational periods during the COVID-19 pandemic
- MEMA's Public Assistance Team is coordinating federal disaster reimbursement in excess of \$500 million for local, state, and non-profit agencies who incurred costs during the COVID-19 pandemic
- MEMA's Hazard Mitigation Branch successfully submitted numerous hazard mitigation grants applications to FEMA, including a new High Hazard Dam Grant.
- MEMA's Recovery & Risk Analysis branch coordinated recovery activities for multiple disasters and emergencies in addition to supporting the COVID-19 response statewide.

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### Notable Customer Service Outreach

The MEMA Risk Analysis team has engaged in many activities to assist, and at the request of, external partners. Listed below are just some of the most noteworthy projects that showcase our dedication to customer service:

- MDH (Maryland Department of Health) Coronavirus dashboard
- Wicomico County LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee) hurricane TTX (Table Top Exercise) scenario and story map development
- COVID-19 PPE dashboard
- Geospatial demographic information tool for MDHS (Maryland Historical Society)
- Coronavirus case mapping platform for MDH
- “Industry Talk” presentation at the TUgis Conference (Maryland Geospatial Conference)
- Meade High School GIS (Geographic Information System) presentation
- COVID-19 Daily Executive Summary Report and dashboard development
- Participation in the 2020 THIRA (Threat Hazard Identification Risk Assessment) & SPR (Stakeholder Preparedness Review)

### Recognition Given to Employees

#### MEMA “Above the Call” Award

MEMA awards the Executive Director’s Above the Call (ABC) Award. This award is given to MEMA employees who exceeds customer service expectations and reflects the core values of Vision, Collaboration, and Reliability. Specifically awardees:

- Activities that have an impact on the work place
- Provide helpful services to others both in and out of the agency
- Go “above and beyond” while showing initiative
- Consistently display outstanding personal qualities

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Employees are nominated for the ABC award by their co-workers. Each quarter, Executive Director Strickland selects a winner based upon nominations and overall impact. Winner of the ABC reward receive:

- Award presentation at the monthly all-staff meeting
- Lunch with the Executive Director (due to social distancing relative to COVID-19, scheduling of lunch dates are in a holding pattern due to COVID-19 social distancing)
- Recognition via MEMA's social media platforms and various other outreach platforms

### 2020 ABC Award Winner



Mark Corser was awarded the MEMA ABC award, largely due to his customer service skills and dedication. Mark received the highest number of nominations ever. Agencies/partners outside of MEMA, who recognized Mark's customer service skills and abilities included DoIT (Department of Information Technology) and MCSS (Maryland Center for School Safety).

### 2020 ABC Award Winner



"Andy Owens handled communications with the JIC (Joint Information Center), and assisted in the field with the public information team for Maryland's COVID-19 testing sites. Andy did this while continuing his dedication to the OOC's legislative and communications duties. He is always responsive, accessible, and courteous. He puts his all into everything he does, whether it's his day job at the OOC or helping the state respond to an unprecedented health crises. He always has a great attitude even under pressure and is a tremendous asset to MEMA."

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### FY20 Leadership Analysis or Summary of FY20 Approach

The customer service mission of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency is aligned to MEMA's overall mission: To proactively reduce disaster risks and reliably manage consequences through collaborative work with Maryland's communities and partners. As such, our customer service mission is to proactively engage with customers in providing consistent, accessible information and support before, during, and after a crisis.

MEMA's customers span a broad range, from other state agencies and federal and local emergency management partners, to community stakeholders, private businesses, and everyday citizens. Given this broad customer base and mission, MEMA delivers a diversity of services and products which range from timely data-driven intelligence, to technical expertise and financial resources.

MEMA's customer service committee members continue to ensure that the agency delivers exceptional customer service, both internally and externally. The committee developed and "Good, better, best, Never let it rest, until the good gets to be better, and the better gets to be best." continues to review the MEMA Customer Service Plan and training curriculum. MEMA's overarching customer service goals are as follows:

1. To provide our customers clear and accessible information, prompt response, and active engagement in the delivery of all MEMA services.
2. To promote effective communication, relationship building, and customer-centric problem solving by regularly training all staff in Customer Service.
3. To cultivate a culture of customer service within the agency.

All MEMA employees are required to complete initial customer service training. The customer service committee meets on a regular basis to review customer service survey results, identify/address areas for improvement, and discuss potential initiatives to enhance customer service within the agency moving forward. In addition to customer service training, MEMA staff are required to go through an onboarding process where the brand strategy, the process MEMA underwent to craft it, and the importance of it are inculcated into each staff member. This is also an ongoing requirement for new MEMA staff. Currently, there are only 2 employees who have not been able to go through the brand strategy onboarding training and they are scheduled to participate in the next training.



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This onboarding is important because it exposes new staff to MEMA's Core Values, which are: Vision, Collaboration, and Reliability. Collaboration and Reliability have to do directly with how we approach problem solving (in a collaborative manner) and how MEMA sees the expectations from our stakeholders. In this case, being *\*reliable\** means fulfilling the stakeholders' expectations in a variety of situations, which include customer service matters. These Core Values represent what MEMA stands for and how staff strive to service clients each and every day.

Perhaps no situation has highlighted how deep this customer service commitment runs through MEMA staff's veins as the 108 days of continued SEOC activation where MEMA's staff was pushed to unprecedented levels of stress, a hyper-evolving and always changing situation, and a relentless pace of requests from MD residents as well as partner agencies. MEMA staff, The Joint Information Center, and the MD Business Emergency Operations Center received countless praises and *\*thank yous\** not only from representatives of other agencies active in the COVID-19 response, but from the residents they serve, for delivering timely, accurate, and crucial information. Throughout all this, MEMA staff still found ways to go well beyond the call of duty by focusing on providing excellent customer services to ***all*** stakeholders, including those with special needs.

All of MEMA's Public Service Announcement (PSA) videos were fully accessible by those with special needs, and MEMA also led the State's communications and outreach COVID-19 campaign in Español, establishing translation protocols early in February in preparation of the spread of the pandemic in MD.

This turned out to be the right decision as COVID-19 disproportionately affected minorities, especially black and Hispanic individuals. Communicating in Spanish was not only about translating documents and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) verbatim, it required an understanding of the socio economic situation that placed Hispanics in a higher risk category as well as the cultural factors that make crisis communications effective vis a vis this community. MEMA received hundreds of praises through their social media platforms for *\*transcreating\** every post, every message, every executive order, every interpretive guidance, every video, and every piece of communications that could make a difference in saving the lives of Hispanics, many of whom worked essential jobs that placed them in the front lines of the war against SARS-COV-2.

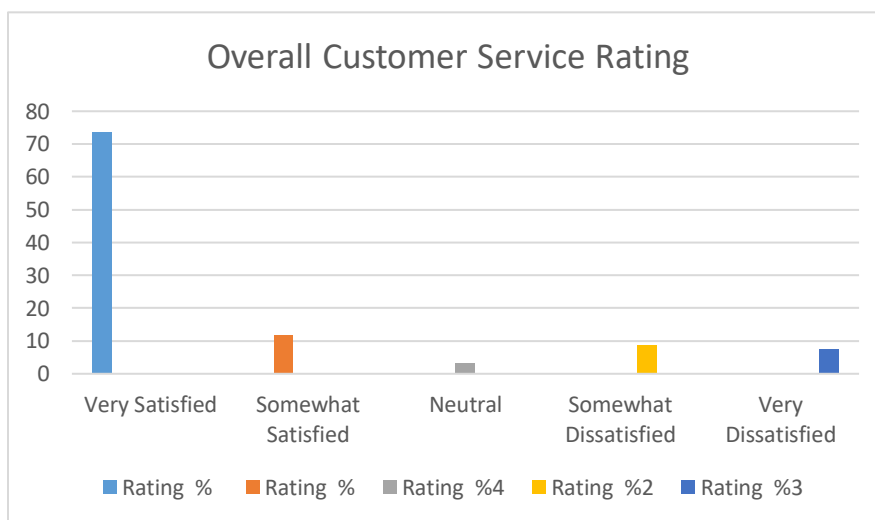


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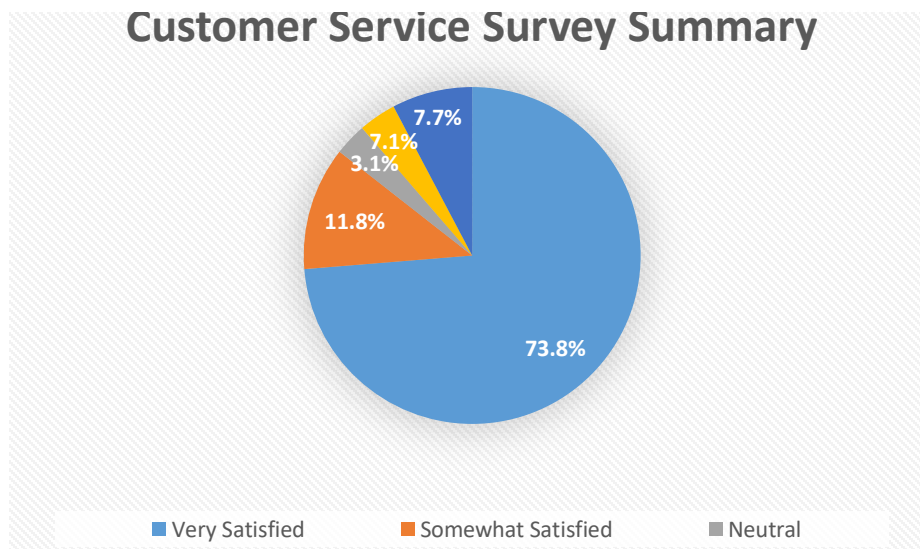
### Detailed FY20 Results and FY21 Plans

Recognizing the ongoing importance of delivering excellent customer service, MEMA continues to strive towards achieving the goals outlined in the Governor’s Customer Service Promise and MEMA’s internal customer service strategy. This section outlines the results from FY20 and discusses plans for FY21.

### Customer Service Survey Results



### Customer Service Survey Summary



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Amidst the challenges of COVID-19 MEMA customer service continues to be of paramount importance. Life that many Marylanders became accustomed to, dramatically changed. During fiscal year 2020, MEMA received an overall satisfaction rating of at least 85%. The favorable survey result indicates that MEMA was on target in meeting a customer service goal of providing excellent customer service. When favorable customer service survey responses were made about MEMA staff, that information was conveyed to leadership to be shared with the identified staff member. Positive staff recognition, tends to positively impact staff performance. With the overall customer service goal being continual customer service improvement, positive reinforcement is a perceived pathway to promote and ensure and sustain positive customer service relationships. In the absence of exigent circumstances, when available, the customer service portal is visited weekly to monitor, track and document performance.

In instances where less than favorable ratings are conveyed by customers, the information is also brought to the attention of MEMA leadership. In addition, when customer service contact information is available, follow up attempts are made with the customer to identify the customer service matter, thus expeditiously making the attempt to promptly identify and address the identified customer service matter.

Approaches to enhance exceptional customer service in 2020, included, but were not limited:

- Monitoring observable employee customer service performance to ensure that corrective actions were taken to facilitate improved performance where needed.
- Tracking survey responses and reaching out to customers whose ratings were less than "very satisfied".
- Utilizing performance data to assist in data-based customer service planning and decision-making.
- Delivering refresher training to all staff members to address and improve performance gaps.
- Delivering "just in time training" to remediate and address customer service matters not addressed or covered in training.

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### Status of Customer Service Training

The momentum for customer service training for the second half of the fiscal year has been slow compared to prior years. This is in part due to the departure of one of the Customer Service Team members, which accounted for 50% of the team. The agency's departure from routine tasks in order to support state-wide COVID-19 issues and needs was also a contributing factor.

### Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution

#### Timeliness of Responding to Customer Inquiries

A review and analysis of supplied customer service information revealed that slightly more than 85% of those surveyed, expressed overall customer satisfaction.

- About 11% of those surveyed, expressed overall customer dissatisfaction.
  - Approximately 60% of this total was linked to a lack of timely response. This represented 6% of the total survey responses.
  - Approximate 45% of the “lack of timely response” totals were COVID-19 related. This total represented 5% of the total survey responses.
- An unintended consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was the shift to virtual meetings, virtual communications, and virtual trainings. A huge lesson learned from this experience was having a hybrid organization incorporating a significantly higher virtual delivery service component and a significantly reduced face-to-face routine which had been the norm. Plans to maintain or improve future time-to-resolution for customer service inquiries via more virtual avenues are in process and are very likely to be influenced by guidance from the health care community.

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### Best Practices

- Establish hotlines to more appropriately route calls and avoid single agency call inundation due to improper routing. As noted above, four hotlines were created during the COVID-19 response and the MJOC answered the phones.
- Training that focuses on recognizing that we have both internal customers (MEMA staff/personnel) and external customers (those outside of MEMA seeking assistance or services). It has been suggested by customer service research that “employees who trust their bosses have more energy, less stress and fewer sick days.”
- Calling and speaking to customers as opposed to sending numerous emails. It is not odd to hear one say, “It was nice to just speak with a person.” NOTE: Emails can be helpful for documentation purposes and to reach more people but a voice conveys a friendlier approach to our customer service communications.
- Follow up communications to gauge customer satisfaction and the need for service modifications.
- Being patient and sending more friendly reminders to customers. NOTE: During COVID-19 activities, people were pulled in multiple directions. It does not hurt to send friendly reminders.
- The creation of the Maryland Coronavirus Dashboard as the official State “go-to source” for Coronavirus infection and testing information.

### Plans for Improvement

The COVID-19 pandemic established a “new normal” regarding the way we conduct day-to day business. Due to suggested or mandated social distancing, future plans include significantly increased, but effective virtual meetings, training and communications. The blueprint for the improvement plan is in process.

### Customer Contact Center (Call Center Data)

The Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC) serves as a communications hub for MEMA’s operational partners. MJOC distributes alert & warning messages throughout the State. In addition to supporting the needs of local and state emergency management customers, the MJOC provides dispatching and after hours answering service for several agencies.



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Below are MJOC’s FY20 statistics:

Total MJOC Phone Calls: 10,178

• Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE):	1210
• Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM):	4272
• Maryland Occupational Safety & Health (MOSH):	510
• Baltimore City Environmental Police Department (BCEPD):	231
• CodeRed Pages:	3146
• Hotline Pages:	809

**NOTE:** Four hotlines were created during the COVID-19 response and the MJOC answered the phones. (Those hot lines were: MDH, Pleasant View, Ventilator, and Bridge Team).

**Total MJOC Alert Messages: 499**

• MDSSTL (Maryland School Safety Tip Line) alerts:	429
• Silver (older adults) alerts:	69
• Amber (child) alerts:	1

## Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives

### Making Agency Services Available Online

The most notable effort MEMA’s Risk Analysis team undertook to improve the overall customer experience for Maryland residents was the Maryland Coronavirus Dashboard. The Risk Analysis team, in collaboration with MDH (Maryland Department of Health) and DoIT (Department of Information Technology), created a dashboard of COVID-19 related information and statistics. It went live for public use only a few days after the Public Health State of Emergency was declared. The dashboard quickly became the official State go-to source for COVID-19 infection and testing information, receiving over 50 million visits to date. Risk Analysis team members worked daily (7 days a week) to maintain, update, and improve the dashboard. The dashboard is located at [coronavirus.maryland.gov](https://coronavirus.maryland.gov) and represents customer service best practices in efficiency, efficacy, breadth, and transparency.

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### Processing Times for Customer Transactions

An added structural agency organizational component to support state-wide needs, (as mentioned previously), is the utilization of hotlines. The use of hotlines will be contingent upon the scope, nature, and duration of the incidents or catastrophic events that occur and cascade. The primary intent of the hotline is to effectively and appropriately respond to inquiries by maximizing the use of time and resources. The template for such a structure is in place and would be configured to accommodate the existing state-wide need as a future plan to streamline and improve customer service and service-related transactions.

### Adjusting Hours to Meet Customer Demands

At the initial stage of the COVID-19 outbreak, routine workplace assignments were suspended. Virtual work assignment were put into place with adjusted work hours to ensure some continuity of regular customer service. In addition, enhanced SEOC (State Emergency Operations Center) staffing was established to support the state-wide efforts to effectively address existing and emerging COVID-19 concerns. This staffing involved both a virtual and non-virtual SEOC presence. Regular staff working hours were reconfigured to accommodate SEOC staffing. This involved teleworking at remote work sites. There has been a gradual return to the normal (regular) working hour routine, from a time perspective, though in a virtual mode, due to social distancing guidance. This staffing posture will continue, until it is deemed safe to return to the formal work place posture.

### Social Media Usage to Improve the Customer Experience

Maintaining MEMA's digital footprint is an important strategy for MEMA to improve its overall customer service. MEMA has been working diligently to enhance its social media following and improve outreach and interaction. Social media is a powerful tool that allows MEMA to reach hundreds of thousands of people during a crisis. Customers who choose to follow MEMA on these social media channels have a need for effective communication before, during, and after a crisis. MEMA is currently active on the following platforms, catering to variety of demographics:

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- Facebook – Over 26,903 new followers, and 21,935 new likes and since January 1, 2020. MEMA's Facebook has a cumulative total of 109,696 followers, and 106,843 likes.
- Twitter – over 13,127 new followers, and 14,105,000 tweet impressions since January 1, 2020. MEMA's Twitter has a cumulative total of 58,600 followers.
- Instagram – Has a cumulative total of 2,738 followers.
- LinkedIn – Has a cumulative total of 4,934 followers.

### Licensing and Permitting from Multiple Perspectives

NOTE: CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION HAVE BEEN DELETED BECAUSE THEY DID NOT APPLY TO MEMA.

### Service to the Community and Our State and Local Partners (Before Face Covering Mandates)



Carroll County, Summer, 2019



Tornado, Westminster,  
February, 2020



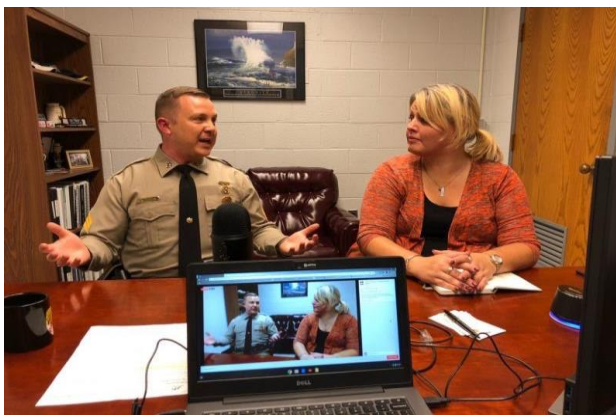
Promotion of "Know Your Zone",  
Ocean City, 2019



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MACo (Maryland Association of Counties) Conference, Ocean City, August, 2019



FACEBOOK Live with Maryland State Police, October, 2019



Private Sector Summit, Baltimore, January, 2019



Harford County, Open House Safety Day, September, 2019



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Frederick County, September, 2019



Ocean City, September, 2019

# Building and Sustaining Excellent Customer Service is the Ultimate Goal!