

IT MUST BE DONE AND THEY'RE GONNA DO IT: DEH RISING TO THE TEST



These are the people who start their shifts as early as 1:00AM every day. Many of us never see them since we're snuggled in bed at that time. But in the Department of Environmental Health's Solid Waste Section, crews and dispatchers are typically at work by 12:30 in the morning, mobilising themselves so the trucks can roll out on time to start collecting our garbage.

Apart from the opportunity for continued employment, why do they do it?

Angello Roye, Acting Operations Manager, has an answer: "Yes, they're scared to get the coronavirus and possibly bring it home to their families, but the guys say they know their job is very important for the country. They say it must be done and they are going to come out and do it."

*"People are pulling together...
helping to solve the problems"*

And they have kept their word. "We have seen the staff really rising to the test," Mr Roye says, "The level of absenteeism is way down, and I haven't heard one person complaining that others are not pulling their weight. People are pulling together; they're helping to solve the problems that come up. For instance, with some of our rear loader

trucks in the garage, they didn't back off. They said, let's get different types of trucks to make sure the garbage is picked up in the meantime."

Protecting the staff is a top priority. DEH Director Richard Simms says, "The DEH has always practiced safety, with staff wearing the necessary PPE when doing their duties. However, since COVID-19, we have stepped up our safety practices, ensuring that our staff are equipped with, and are wearing, their respective PPE. Supervisors are ensuring that, on a daily basis, they check staff and issue whatever gear they require before dispatching them to their respective daily tasks."

Both Messrs Simms and Roye say it's been a challenging time for staff. The landfill fire in March was the biggest they have had. Right on the heels of that came COVID-19. Add to that the fact that, this week, they are in the middle of relocating the dispatch offices to the landfill area as the owner of the section of property they were on, Dart, is preparing to use it.

Another issue they must manage is making sure they maintain enough provisions, of not only PPE, but things like cleaning supplies to ensure the trucks and other equipment are cleaned daily. "These things are in much heavier use now, so what we would go through in three months we're now using in two weeks," Mr Roye explains.





Acting Operations Manager
Angello Roye



Solid Waste Collection Driver
Vincent Morris prepares to start
his shift.



Driver Tonygee Fellner dons his mask while
Collection Supervisor Debert Dawes checks
radios before dispatch



Landscaping waste deposits back in operation

Staff are not able to move around as they normally would so little things mean a lot. "The Director makes it easy for all the staff to get lunch every day so they don't have to be out standing in line," says Mr Roye. "We are also being more flexible; once the crews complete their route, even if it's before their 8-hour shift officially ends, they can go home. It makes it easier for them to work."

Deputy Director, Solid Waste, Michael Haworth points out that the recycling team continues to collect and process recyclable materials from the depots. In addition, "Our landfill team had to reorganise the site after the fire to keep us disposing the garbage, and our fleet personnel sanitise and manage the trucks and equipment to keep it all moving. All our teams have faced up to the COVID-19 challenge."

Acknowledging the anxiety the staff faced, he added, "It is a little easier now. We are seeing relaxation of curfew based on the low number of confirmed cases. However at the beginning we did not know if lives would be lost so the concerns were real. Overall the response from our DEH team has been superb."

Eighty-four employees currently provide the Solid Waste Section's essential services to the public. Ten of them are temporary staff members added recently with the Deputy

Governor's approval. This addition has been to assist unemployed persons during the COVID-19 period while strengthening the Section's resources.

In addition to garbage collection, drop-off and landfill operations and recycling, the DEH also continues to provide, public-space clean up, and engineering services to deal with Planning approvals for pool construction, cemetery vault construction and burial services. The engineering services are being conducted remotely. Some 15 staff, mostly in the administrative team, are working from home. The only service not available right now is direct, over-the-counter payment for burial vaults, container services and garbage fees. However, people can arrange these payments by appointment by calling DEH at 949-6696.

"The work continues," Mr Roye says about the Solid Waste operations, "the guys really love their job and appreciate hearing thanks from people they see when they're out on the road."

Director Simms is grateful for the team: "Morale is high and I sincerely commend my staff for their dedication and commitment to their work, particularly during these challenging times."



CONCH CALL SALUTE

In days gone by when distinctive sound of the conch shell echoed through the air, people took notice, knowing that it was making an important announcement. Fast forward to today and this traditional 'attention grabber' is once again being used, but for a much different purpose.

The Conch Call Salute is an idea that is unique to Cayman but mirrors the sentiment of the international round of applause that takes place in different countries around

the world at 7:00PM. It is our Caymankind way of paying tribute to all of the men and women who are diligently working on the front lines of our battle against COVID-19. Each day, 6:59 until 7:00PM, the iconic sound of a conch shell being blown will be played on public and private radio stations to pay tribute to our frontline workers across all three Islands.



Why A Conch Call?

For the past few months, the Cayman Islands, like many countries around the world, has grappled to contain the spread of COVID-19. Our borders closed to keep the outside world outside, and curfews and restrictions were put in place to keep residents indoors and out of harm's way.

With each passing day it is becoming more evident that Government's policies are paying dividends. But aside from those policies, a great deal of our success is due to the dedication, professionalism, and commitment of many unsung heroes like you, who are working on our front lines.

These include healthcare workers, first responders, uniformed services and public servants, as well as employees in grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential businesses who are providing the essential services, protection, and information we need to help us stay safe, and our Islands functioning during this global pandemic.

And we want to say thank you for your service!

Where can you hear it?

The Conch Call Salute can be heard daily at 6:59PM on Radio Cayman, all DMS stations (Hot 104.1, Kiss FM, X107.1, Cayrock 92.5), Star 92.7, Big Fish 95.5FM and Hurley's Media.

The message listeners hear is:

"This is the 6:59PM Time Check Salute! The Cayman Islands community would like to extend our appreciation to all of the frontline staff who are working to keep our Islands safe and functioning during these difficult times. Join us as we salute them in Caymankind style with the blowing of the conch shell."

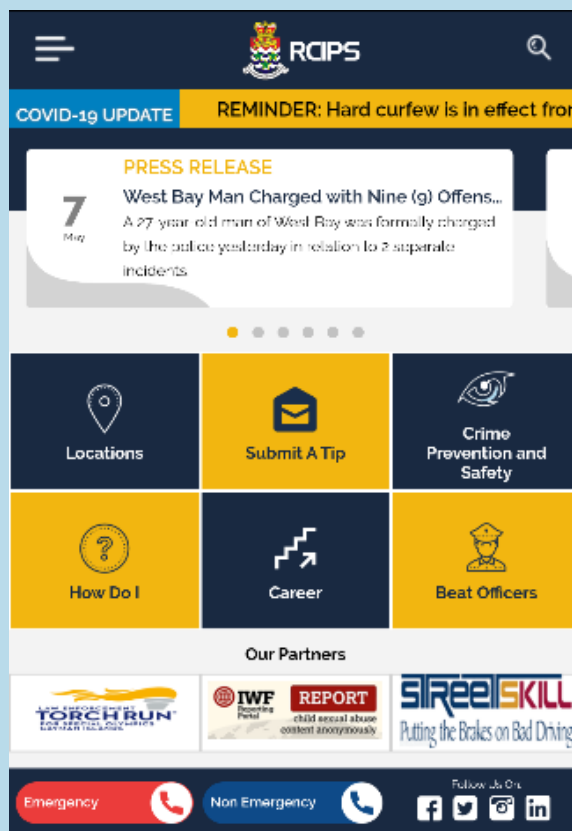
For older folk, the familiar sound will undoubtedly bring back memories, but for the younger generation and millennials, it will be a new experience, as conch shells are not blown often these days.

But with social distancing fast becoming our new way of life, it is a way for us all to feel united and remember that we're all in this together.

DOWNLOAD THE RCIPS APP FOR COVID-19 AND EMERGENCY ALERTS

If you're on the frontline, it means you're not always by a computer. A convenient way for you to get quick updates on COVID-19 is on the RCIPS' mobile app.

The App is free to download to your mobile phone. It features alerts and emergency updates, police press releases, community beat officer mobile numbers, and contacts and addresses for all RCIPS locations in a quick and easily accessible format. You can download the RCIPS mobile app directly from the Google Play or Apple App Stores. To find it, enter "RCIPS" in the search field.





Coronavirus Tips: How to Disinfect Your Grocery Items

Here's how you can keep your family safe before and after grocery shopping (Special provision: Elderly persons and essential workers may shop between the hours of 6am and 7am)

Before you go

- Write your grocery list on paper (include essentials needed for seven days)
- Pack wipes/hand sanitizer
- Wear clothing which can be washed in high heat
- Have ID and credit/debit cards readily available
- Avoid using cash, where necessary

While you are shopping

- Park away from the entrance
- Practice social distancing (stay six feet away from others)
- Wipe down cart/basket handles. Use wipes/hand sanitizer as needed
- ONLY touch items you plan on buying
- Avoid cell phone use in the store
- Don't touch your face
- Place grocery bags in the car trunk
- Wipe down door handles, steering wheel and gear shift

When you get home

- Remove shoes outside
- Remove clothing, place in heated wash cycle ASAP
- Unload groceries in one area
- Discard unnecessary packaging (cereal boxes, produce bags etc.)
- Wipe down all items (cans, boxes, bottles, jars, frozen foods and bread bags) with a disinfectant or soap, water and bleach mixture
- Wash fruits and vegetables (with soap) for at least 20 seconds
- Wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds
- Pack away groceries as normal
- Wipe down, handbag or wallet, cell phone, credit/debit card, doorknobs, faucets and counter tops
- Mop and disinfect floors



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CULTURE & HOUSING
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT



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