

## **COURTHOUSE SECURITY**

The Montgomery County Courthouse Security Committee has implemented the following procedures to be instituted at the Montgomery County Courthouse and its connecting Buildings on August 15, 2022:

- One public entrance will be located at each of the Courthouse Buildings as follows:
  - Main Courthouse – 301 North Main (Entrance on west side of building)
  - Atrium Building – 210 West Davis Street
  - Alworth Building – 207 West Phillips
  - Keeshan Building – 301 North ThompsonAll members of the public entering the courthouses will enter through the above listed security areas for each building.
  
- All members of the public and all items carried on or about their person are subject to search and/or security screening. All items carried on or about their person will be placed in a tray for X-Ray security viewing by Courthouse Security personnel.
  
- All members of the public entering the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings will walk through a metal detector for security screening and/or be screened by other security device.
  
- Signs will be posted regarding the carrying of prohibited items such as guns and knives even if the individual possesses a concealed handgun permit.
  
- Signs in different languages will be posted to inform the public of the above information as well as other security instructions and information.
  
- Please direct any questions regarding these procedures to Montgomery County Courthouse Security at 936-672-2243.

Ensuring the safety and security of all people who utilize the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings is a top priority of the Montgomery County Courthouse Security Committee and the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department.

## Prohibited Items

The Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings have security systems consisting of metal detectors, cameras, and x-ray machines. Anything considered to be a weapon or that is deemed unacceptable by the security officers will be confiscated and/or dealt with appropriately. All visitors and employees are encouraged to report suspicious activity/suspicious persons to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and/or Bailiffs.

### **WARNING!!**

**Attempting to bring these items into this building may result in your arrest, a citation being issued, or other criminal charges being filed against you.**

The following items are prohibited in the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings:

- Alcoholic Beverages;
- Ammunition;
- Box Cutters;
- Brass Knuckles and Glass Knuckles;
- Drug Paraphernalia;
- Explosive Materials or Objects;
- Guns and Replicas of Guns (includes toys);
- Handcuff Keys and Handcuffs (unless they are being carried by a law enforcement officer);
- Illegal Drugs;
- Knives or Swords – of any kind;
- Scissors and Knitting Needles;
- Tools of Any Kind, such as hammers, screwdrivers, drills, etc. (unless they are being carried by someone who the County hired to work on equipment or the building);
- Pepper / OC Sprays;
- Weapon-like Objects, such as bats, clubs, tasers, batons, and the like (unless they are being carried by a law enforcement officer);
- Animals (other than service animals); and
- Any other items that would fall under Penal Code Section 1.07(17):

“Deadly weapon” means:

- (A) a firearm or anything manifestly designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting death or serious bodily injury; or
- (B) anything that in the manner of its use or intended use is capable of causing death or serious bodily injury.

## **Courthouse Security Screening Procedures**

The public enter and exit the building through the public front entrance doors in each of the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings located on the first floor.

All public entering the courthouse through the front door of the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings will go through the security screening process.

Items such as illegal narcotics, firearms, knives, scissors, carpet or box cutters, letter openers or other edged weapons are considered contraband.

When individuals are found with contraband, which constitutes a criminal violation, the items shall be seized and the person taken into custody or issued a criminal citation, depending on the circumstances.

Individuals found with items that would otherwise be legal to carry, such as pocketknives or pepper spray, will be advised that they must take these items back to their vehicles. The security officers will not store items for the individuals nor accept them as discarded property.

1. Individuals entering the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings will be screened by use of walk-through magnetometers and/or hand-held magnetometers.
2. Individuals who bring items into the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings for court purposes must check in at the screening station on the first floor main entrance for each of the the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings where the items will be checked and screened by security personnel.
3. The X-ray machine will scan items as listed in procedures.
4. Individuals shall place all items on the X-ray conveyor belt and empty all pockets into a tray before entering the walk-through magnetometer.
  - A positive indication by the magnetometer will require a second walk-through by the individual.
  - A second positive indication by the walk-through magnetometer will require a search using the hand magnetometer to locate the source of the positive indication.
  - The security officer may take the person to the side and pat down the individual if it is determined that some suspected object is causing the positive indication and there is reasonable suspicion that the individual has an object that poses a security risk.
5. Suspicious images observed in packages or handbags shall be closely examined by having the owner open the package for inspection.

Ensuring the safety and security of all people who utilize the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings is a top priority of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office.

## **Employee Identification Badge Access to the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings**

All County employees must swipe their Employee Identification Badge to gain entrance into the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings through other than the public entrances. All entrances into the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings will be accessible by this method. Any employee without their Employee Identification Badge must enter through security at the public entrances.

Montgomery County is committed to providing a safe and secure workplace for all employees. As employees you share the responsibility for the safety and security of yourselves, fellow employees, the public and guests.

Employees can help ensure a safe work environment by doing the following:

- Do not allow visitors access to secure areas if uncomfortable about the stated purpose of their visit.
- Do not allow someone visiting your office access to other secure offices or areas.
- Notify security personnel of strange objects, packages or briefcases.
- Do not admit unexpected visitors, such as repair people or couriers, without verification from your supervisor regarding the purpose of their visit.
- Ask strangers in your work area for identification.
- Keep security doors locked at all times and confidential information in locked cabinets when not in use.
- Keep all valuables in locked drawers or cabinets.
- Each employee is responsible for safeguarding his or her Employee Identification Badge. Report any damaged, lost, stolen or misplaced badge immediately to your supervisor and the IT Department.
- Do not lend your Employee Identification Badge to anyone.
- Ensure that all external access points are properly secured.
- Do not leave your badge unattended.

Remember, all employees are required to appropriately display their Employee Identification Badge upon request at all time at the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings.

## **Montgomery County Sheriff's Office**

### **Courthouse Security Policy and Procedures for Law Enforcement**

Certified Law Enforcement Officers **acting in their official capacity** may retain their weapons while in the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings. The following procedures were established for law enforcement officers who wish to retain their weapons while in the secured areas of the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings:

- All law enforcement officers, both in uniform and not in uniform, must display their departmental photo ID or a standard picture ID card issued by their agency to Courthouse Security upon entry to the building while armed.
- For safety and security reasons, all law enforcement officer must advise Courthouse security of their destination in the building.
- Any law enforcement officer not in possession of a valid departmental photo ID will not be allowed to bring a weapon into the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings and must comply with the security screening to enter the building through a designated door at the public entrances of the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings.
- For the purpose of this policy a weapon is described as a firearm, knife, ammunition, impact weapon, electronic restraint, chemical agent or explosive device.
- Official capacity refers to any activity that arises from employment as a law enforcement officer that requires the officers to be in the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings.
- **Official capacity DOES NOT INCLUDE appearing as a victim, witness, or party in any court proceeding, civil, family, probate, or criminal in which they are personally involved and which IS NOT related to work.**
- Any law enforcement agency or officer requiring a waiver to these procedures should contact Courthouse Security at 936-672-2243 in advance of appearing at the Montgomery County Courthouse Buildings. Waivers will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Undercover officers should contact the above if special accommodations are needed.
- Officers must adhere to departmental policy referring to all use of force and other aspects relating to carrying a firearm while on and off duty per departmental policy.
- Non-Sworn Law Enforcement staff from other agencies entering the courthouse in their official capacity, i.e. filing departmental official documents and testifying on behalf of the state as witness, may bypass security by presenting their departmental photo identification.

## **Information for Attorneys: The Attorney Identification Card**

Attorneys who wish to apply for a Attorney Identification Card should go to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office District 1 Office located at 100 North Loop 336 East, Conroe, Texas 77301 and complete an application for the Attorney Identification Card.

All applicants need to have a letter of good standing from the Montgomery County Bar Association when you complete your application.

Once presented with a letter from the MCBA ensuring the attorney's good standing with the Bar, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office will then conduct a limited background check through TCIC/NCIC.

If all requirements are met and clear, then the application and guest permit will be approved by the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office.

Each year the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office will open up the schedule for renewal where attorneys complete a renewal application to update information; once the State Bar and limited background check has been cleared.

The Attorney Identification Card allows attorneys wearing the Attorney Identification Card and having only a purse or briefcase to enter the Montgomery County Buildings WITHOUT going through the security screening.

Attorneys with extensive case materials will be processed through regular security procedures.

The Attorney Identification Card is a privilege extended by the Montgomery County Sheriff and the MCBA to attorneys who are members of the Montgomery County Bar.

This privilege is not extended to the attorney's employees or case materials not confined to the attorney's briefcase or purse.

**Attorneys must understand that even with the card, they are subject to search by the MCSO.**

The Attorney Identification Card is valid for one calendar year at a cost of \$30.00, paid in cash at the Montgomery County Sheriff's District/Patrol Office.

Attorneys wishing to obtain the Attorney Identification Card or who have any questions regarding same should contact the Montgomery County Bar Association at [admin@mcbatx.com](mailto:admin@mcbatx.com).