

Certification *Profile*



Sabastian A. Velilla, CPP, security division administrator of the Security Services Division, City of Newport News, Virginia, likes to describe his job in football terms: “When playing on the offensive line, the job is

clear: protect the quarterback. In my work, the city is the quarterback and my job is protecting the asset—whether human or capital.”

Following his service as a military policeman and then security assistance program coordinator for the U.S. Department of the Army as a civilian, Velilla began his career in private security as an auditor for the Jack Eckerd Corporation. In 2007, he joined the Security Services Division in Newport News, Virginia, where he is responsible for the overall management of security services and programs for the city—from planning and development to implementation. He currently has five direct reports who oversee 60 front line professionals on an around-the-clock basis with capital asset protection of more than 200 million.

Sabastian earned his Certified Protection Professional® (CPP) credential in 2007. It was a requirement for his position with the Newport News government. “The CPP garners respectability,” states Velilla. “ASIS certified practitioners are recognized as subject matter experts in the security field.” The city actually requires members of its security team to join ASIS and encourages board certification at

all levels. Sabastian observes, “The city leadership is serious about the security of its employees, its businesses, and visitors. Their support of ASIS board certification is a testament to the degree of their commitment.”

A typical day for Velilla begins with a team meeting, which often includes a video review of the night’s events. Velilla readily admits he enjoys being hands-on with the central monitoring staff. “I like to get my hands in the mix,” he says. “There is rarely a day that something interesting is not captured on camera.”

Aside from routine day-to-day tasks, Velilla also conducts vulnerability assessments, oversees building evacuation drills, designs security plans for new construction, and meets with department directors on security matters. Among his greatest challenges, he says, is to “sell” the need for security improvements to key players.

A visit from then-candidate, now President, Barack Obama to Newport News in 2008 remains one of Velilla’s most memorable moments on the job. “Our division provided camera surveillance and worked in concert with the Secret Service and the Newport News Police Department to cover potential security threats and hazards,” remembers Velilla. For this event, his cameras had the only complete coverage of the area, and Velilla took up his position, albeit from the press box as opposed to the field of play.

By Leigh A. McGuire, ASIS public relations manager