

The eyes and ears of Claymont

Evraz Steel security chief is not your average security guard

By [Jesse Chadderdon](#)

Community News

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Claymont, Del. — Sgt. James Carter is the Chief of Security at the Evraz Steel Mill in Claymont. In many ways, he's the town sheriff as well.

With the 450-acre mill site at the heart of the riverfront town, Carter and his staff of 15 Gettier security guards are the eyes and ears of a large portion of an area that's faced its share of crime problems.

Now, they're allied with the town's Community Prevention Area Watch (CPAW), a collaborative program where the vigilance of increased citizen patrols aims to deter criminal activity. The steel company is one of the major financial backers.

Carter's first responsibility is monitoring the mill and making sure employees, equipment and materials are secure. But as he patrols the property, which stretches from Fox Point State Park north to Naamans Road along the Delaware River, he's on the lookout for suspicious people.

"We've got everything from illegal dumping, theft, prostitution, and drugs. We've even had child molesters hide on the property," he said. "Everybody wants to hide here because of the size."

Police aren't familiar with the ins and outs of the mill, and because of the nature of operations there, the site has several tunnels, drainage ditches, railroad tracks and large buildings that make it palatable to the criminal element as a hiding place.

But Carter and his men, however, are out to make it as unpalatable as possible.

"People are surprised when Evraz guards get involved in criminal activity when it doesn't directly affect the plant," Carter said. "But if you were being robbed, wouldn't you want your neighbor to call police? We serve the client we're here to protect and the community in which we serve."

Many envision a security guard as someone corralling teens at the mall, he said, but mill trespassers are up against a much tougher brand of patrolmen.

With copper prices near an all-time high, Carter said there are more and more thieves stealing wiring, then retreating to the woods surrounding the mill to burn the coating off before selling it to local scrap dealers.

After that, trespassing is the biggest issue. And generally speaking, if someone's there, they're there for the wrong reasons.

Carter said the mill recently had to shut down its entire melt shop when a drug dealer from Knollwood decided to hide from police at the plant. On another occasion, police asked Carter and his men to keep an eye out for a white jeep they believed was involved in a theft from a Naamans Road business. Sure enough, they found the jeep a few minutes later driving down the rail lines used by the mill to transport steel.

"One guy was trespassing and all I did was tell him to stay off the property and when I asked for his ID, his cocaine and drug pipe fell out of his pocket," he said. "Well, now we have a bigger problem."

Carter and his men are also responsible for ensuring the mill's 300-plus employees and visiting contractors are observing safety protocols. If an accident occurs, he makes sure the employees involved are drug tested.

Carter said he speaks routinely with CPAW organizer Dee Whildin, and attends monthly civic meetings to keep resident up-to-date on criminal activity at Evraz.

In just the few months since CPAW got off the ground this spring, Carter said he's already seen a difference.

"There are fewer people running around here," he said. "It just seems some of the people we have problems with are more aware that people are watching them."

Name: James Carter
Age: 39
Hometown: Elsmere
Rank: Sergeant
Company: Gettier Security
Title: Chief of Security
Site: Evraz Steel, Claymont

Notable

Carter has full autonomy to work with law enforcement agents and prosecutors on how to try criminals arrested on the 450-acre site. In two years, he has followed 20+ cases through the courts, and almost never agrees to plea deals.

"I have zero tolerance...I don't plea bargain. You do the crime, you do the time."

"They want to let people off easy for trespassing. Well, if he's trespassing with a wrench in his hand, bolt cutters, and it's the same person that's been driving up and down the street for the last few days, then I don't think so."

Did You Know?

Carter provides the security detail for the community quest for the Claymont Christmas Weed. A new tree-sized weed is pulled from woods on the mill's property every year and is featured prominently in the town's Christmas parade.

"The first time, I pulled up a [small] weed and said 'here you go' and they looked at me and said 'that won't work.' We ended up with something six-foot tall."

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