DPS, County Employees Recognized for Years of Service

Congratulations to 19 Department of Public Safety employees and to our colleagues in other County departments who were recognized at a ceremony on November 1st for reaching milestones in their careers in public service!

**30 Years**
- Kathryn Cabral
- Richard Lohwasser
- Tori Rosa
- Marvin Watkins
- Karen Zero

**20 Years**
- Timothy Detwiler

**15 Years**
- Stephanie Barber
- Lewis Munoz

**10 Years**
- Corrine Borai
- Scott Bridges
- Timothy Carter
- Martin Joyce
- Samantha Lindley
- Robert Moore
- Shannon Oberholtzer
- Richard Rowley, Sr.
- Laura Turnbull-Peters
- Andrew Ventura
- Matthew Wisniewski

These employees have provided a combined 310 years of dedicated service to the citizens and first responders of Montgomery County. Rich Rowley, Rick Lohwasser, and Matt Wisniewski were able to attend the ceremony and are pictured above (left to right). Thank you for everything and congratulations on this significant achievement!

Department of Public Safety Publishes 2022 Annual Report

On November 6th, the Department of Public Safety published its 2022 Annual Report. Formatted as an ArcGIS StoryMap, the Annual Report provides partner agencies and community members with the opportunity to learn about the Department’s work and revisit some important activities and statistics from the past year.

“I am always proud of the work our personnel do daily, some of which is highlighted in this report,” said Michael O. Vest, Director of the Department of Public Safety. “Above all else, the driving priority of the men and women of this agency is the safety of all members of our community, and they demonstrate this each day with their professional and steadfast response to incidents. I remain immensely proud of the work they perform to maintain public safety while working collaboratively within the community to build lasting relationships.”

The 2022 Annual Report is available for viewing by the public at [https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b40b6090bd7d4ea090a63b7e06ed8341](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b40b6090bd7d4ea090a63b7e06ed8341).

Check out past reports at [https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/3465/Past-Reports](https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/3465/Past-Reports). With questions, comments, or feedback, contact Todd Stieritz, Deputy Director – Public Affairs, at Todd.Stieritz@montgomerycountypa.gov.
Veterans Find New Ways to Serve as Volunteers in Montco Fire Companies

Firefighters across Montgomery County went from serving their country to serving their communities as volunteers in the local fire companies.

Many of them find similarities between the two types of service. In honor of Veteran’s Day, the Montgomery County Fire Chiefs’ Association and www.montcofirefighters.org are happy to spotlight veterans around the county who volunteer at their local fire company.

Once Security for President Bush, Joe Hoffman Now Serves Abington Township Residents

A casual conversation with a neighbor seven years ago led Joe Hoffman to his journey as a volunteer firefighter at Abington Fire Company. As a fellow Marine, his neighbor explained the similarities between the military and firefighting, which ultimately sparked Hoffman’s interest in joining.

"Volunteering as a firefighter was another way I could serve those in need,“ said Hoffman, who served as military police from 2004-2012. “My uncle was a marine and after 9/11 I knew I wanted to do something to help protect my country.”

Hoffman had a unique experience in the military; he served as a security guard for U.S. President George W. Bush (right). Although his role was incredibly serious and at times stressful, it gave him the opportunity to travel around the country and around the world. He visited Germany, France, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Mexico, and the majority of the United States, including Camp David and the President’s Ranch.

Now, he is incredibly active at Abington Fire Company. Not only does he fight fires, but he performs inspections as the foreman of fire apparatus, serves on the township’s Technical Rescue Team, and acts as secretary for the company. His professional background as a banker helps with his responsibilities such as processing deposits and fund drive donations.

“Working a corporate job is inherently boring to me,” said Hoffman. “Volunteering as a firefighter brought back a sense of excitement. Not only is it physically demanding, but I never know what type of call is going to come in. There’s never a dull moment.”

Paul Radetzky Always Wanted to be a Volunteer Firefighter

Thanks to his background as an auto mechanic, Paul Radetzky was assigned as a colonel’s driver and mechanic in the U.S. Army in 1971. Later stationed in South Korea, Radetzky was assigned as a general’s chauffeur. Similar to serving in today’s volunteer emergency services, he was on call 24 hours a day.

“There are a lot of similarities between the fire service and military service. Both are very structured and organized,” said Radetzky. “I came into the fire service with a deep understanding of the chain of command because of my experience in the military.”
Radetzky (below, left) had always wanted to “ride on the big red trucks” but little did he know when he joined Rockledge Fire Company, it would turn into something more.

“There’s a lot of self-satisfaction when you’re helping people on the worst day of their lives, whether it’s saving someone in an auto incident trapped in a vehicle or putting out a house fire,” said Radetzky. “Your community needs you.”

On top of pride and self-satisfaction, volunteering is a way to create long-lasting friendships. Even though Radetzky is no longer an active firefighter, he serves on the board of directors and is the chairman for the company’s fund drive.

“Members do more than fight fires together,” said Radetzky. “I consider my fire company a second family.”

Every Christmas Eve, he joins fellow volunteers as they drive Santa Claus in the fire truck around the community to wave to neighborhood kids. The volunteers also hold car shows, fundraisers, and during COVID-19 they rode by people’s houses on their birthdays and anniversaries.

“I would estimate that 95% of my friends are the fellas I volunteer with,” said Radetzky. “I’ve been to their weddings, been there when they started having kids and watched the kids grow up to join us as active members of our fire company.”

From Aircraft Firefighting to Groundwork, Richard Lengel Serves as Deputy Fire Marshal for Pottstown Borough

To say Richard Lengel is dedicated to protecting his community is an understatement. He started volunteering at Good Will Fire Company when he was 14 years old as a junior firefighter. Throughout the years, he has served as a volunteer firefighter, EMT, medic, and he worked as a police officer for 27 years before retiring as chief of police.

On top of serving his community, Lengel (right) served his country as an aircraft firefighter for four years. One of them he spent in Vietnam.

Now, he teaches others the skills he’s learned as an instructor for the Montgomery County Fire Academy teaching aircraft awareness, fire investigation, and fire police skills.

“I love to impart knowledge to others, but at the same time, when I teach my students, they teach me,” said Lengel.

He recently retired from his role as Pottstown Fire Department Chief but still serves as the Deputy Fire Marshal, only responding to major fire investigations.
“Volunteering could lead to a future career in emergency services,” said Lengel. “Volunteers are one of the keystones to keeping our communities safe. We need support and we need people.”

**District 8 Commander, John Otte, Oversees 16 Veterans of Foreign War Posts in Pennsylvania**

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is an organization created to foster camaraderie and advocate on behalf of all United States veterans. As the Senior Executive of VFW District 8, John Otte, U.S. Army veteran, represents the district at the state level. He manages a staff of fifty volunteers and is the financial manager for sixteen VFW locations. He also volunteers as a firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician at the Fire Department of Montgomery Township.

“I am the senior leader of VFW’s programs including recruiting patriots and community service. I am an avid speaker at Veteran’s Day ceremonies and the state council of administration,” said Otte. “This is a 100% volunteer position.”

Otte always had a passion for service. He joined the military when he was 18 and served for 21 years. Starting as a staff sergeant he rose through the ranks, ending as military police officer and forensics investigator.

“At 18 I was too young to go into law enforcement so I went into military law enforcement,” said Otte.

After serving as military law enforcement and a combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm, Otte was discharged and shortly after he joined his local fire company.

“The fire department is a paramilitary organization. What I love about the fire company is what I loved about the military: the camaraderie, common bond, life-long friendships,” said Otte. “We all have each other’s backs.”

“Volunteering is about putting service before self,” said Otte. “Military veterans are excellent volunteers because they understand the need for service, but anybody who has the want or desire to help their community, can do it.”

**Paying Tribute to Montgomery County Veterans**

“Veteran’s Day is an opportunity for us to highlight the amazing volunteers within Montgomery County fire companies who also served our country,” said President of the Montgomery County Fire Chiefs Association George Wilmot III.

Those interested in serving their community by volunteering at their local fire company can sign up at [www.montcofirefighters.org](http://www.montcofirefighters.org).

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*Editor’s Note: This article was originally formatted as a press release and is republished in Public Safety News courtesy of Jessica Lis, Public Relations and Social Media Specialist for The Communication Solutions Group (Jenkintown, PA).*

*The Montgomery County Fire Chiefs’ Association was awarded a $686,000 FEMA SAFER (Staffing For Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant in 2021 and is currently working with The Communication Solutions Group on a four-year countywide volunteer firefighter recruitment campaign. To check out the campaign’s website, visit [www.montcofirefighters.org](http://www.montcofirefighters.org)*
Save the Date for Upcoming Fire Academy Programs

Ice Rescue and Emergency Response

Registration is now open for the Montgomery County Fire Academy’s Ice Rescue and Emergency Response course. This Pennsylvania Fish and Boat curriculum class trains first responders in tactics and techniques for performing rescues on ice. Water Rescue and Emergency Response is a required prerequisite. The course will be held on January 18th, 23rd, 25th (6:45-10:45 p.m.) and 28th (8:15 a.m.-4:45 p.m.) with a weather make-up date of February 11th if needed. Register here today!

2024 Chief Officer Seminar

The 2024 Chief Officer Seminar will be held on Saturday, January 27, 2024 at the Public Safety Training Campus. The theme of this year’s seminar will be firefighter safety and wellness. There are still some presentation slots available if you or someone you know is interested in presenting. Please submit presentation requests and other questions regarding the seminar to Deputy Director Rob Carovillano at Robert.Carovillano@montgomerycountypa.gov.

US&R Holds Annual Live Trench Rescue Drill

On Sunday, November 12th, the Montgomery County Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) Team held a trench rescue drill at Gill Quarry in East Norriton Township. Fortunately, trench rescues are not a common occurrence but when they do happen, they tend to be complex, require critical thinking skills, and create numerous safety concerns for both trapped subjects and rescuers.

US&R trains in a live trench at least once per year to ensure members keep their skills sharp and maintain their feel for real trench conditions. Rescuers must be able to assess soil profiles and characteristics, understand the forces being applied by the shoring components, listen for sounds like a loose rock falling from the lip of the trench, and, perhaps most of all, remember that every action at a trench rescue has a reaction.

To start the drill, a briefing was held reviewing trench statistics, incident safety, shoring techniques, and some of the newer concepts coming from trench rescue industry leaders. Team members then worked for several hours building out different types of shoring systems. Montgomery County US&R’s robust trench equipment cache is carried on Collapse 20 and the team’s Trench POD.

The Department of Public Safety would like to sincerely thank Gill Quarries, Inc. for hosting the US&R Team for this important training session.
In early November, the Department of Public Safety’s new field command and communications unit arrived in Eagleville. Field Comm 1 is a 46’ Pierce Velocity chassis delivered by Glick and outfitted by Frontline Communications. DPS technicians will be working to put the final touches on the truck over the next few weeks before it goes in service.

Recently, in recognition of National First Responders Day, PECO donated $2,000 to support programs at the Montgomery County Fire Academy. Over the years, PECO has been a generous and consistent supporter of MCDPS. The Department of Public Safety would like to thank PECO for their donation and wish all of their employees a very safe and happy holiday season!

The first Code Blue of the 2023-2024 winter season was issued on Monday, November 20th. A Code Blue is declared for Montgomery County when the temperature and/or wind chill will be at or below 20°F. Wind chill is used to describe what the air temperature feels like due to the combination of cold temperatures and winds blowing on exposed skin.
Department of Public Safety Career Opportunities

The Department of Public Safety is seeking qualified applicants for the following vacancies. For more information about the roles or to apply online, visit www.montgomerycountypa.gov/jobs or click on the links below. With questions, email publicsafety@montgomerycountypa.gov or call (610) 631-6500 during business hours.

Emergency Management

The Assistant Director of Emergency Management – Special Operations is responsible for the coordination and management of the Montgomery County HazMat Team, Urban Search and Rescue Team, Logistics Program, and other County sponsored response teams. This position will work directly with the management and command structures of the above-mentioned teams to ensure efficient, safe, and compliant response to all requested team operations, exercises/training, and County sponsored events. This position will work with the Deputy Director for Emergency Management to develop operational budgets for the HazMat and US&R Teams and the Logistics Program. During EOC activations, this position will serve as a Deputy EOC Manager, if required. In this role, the position will assist the County Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) with support and coordination for all concurrent incidents within Montgomery County. In times that the EMC and EOC Manager are not present, this position will act with their authority to ensure operation of the EOC.

Fire Academy

The Fire Instructor delivers fire training courses in various emergency services disciplines including fire suppression, technical rescue, driver/operator, officer/instructor development, and hazardous materials. In addition, instructors may be utilized to teach specialized courses in subject matters such as emergency management, first aid/CPR, EVOC, PA Fish and Boat Water Rescue, instructional techniques, and fire service administration.

The Ignition Control Officer is responsible to safely construct, ignite, and control fires in the Montgomery County live fire burn building for fire suppression training programs, drills, and exercises in accordance with the Montgomery County Fire Academy Standard Operating Guidelines and NFPA 1403 Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions. The Ignition Control Officer may also be called upon to support additional Fire Academy training programs as needed. This position is designed to serve as a developmental pathway for future fire instructors.

Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program

The Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program works collaboratively with multiple offices and departments throughout the County to address the issues of complex patients who use the Emergency Department for the treatment of substance use and behavioral health disorders. The program uses mobile resources to deliver care and services to patients in an out-of-hospital environment in coordination with healthcare facilities or other healthcare providers. This program additionally focuses on substance use disorder patients to prevent unnecessary emergency department visits and establish a clear referral pathway from the field to long-term rehabilitative care. MIH specialists shall be certified PA Dept. of Health EMS workers or RNs with prehospital experience, approved for unrestricted medical command authorization by the DPS Chief Medical Officer, and be responsible for identifying and engaging with various patient cohorts for follow-up by the multi-disciplinary Mobile Integrated Health Team. Available positions:

Full-Time EMT | Full-Time Paramedic | Part-Time EMT | Part-Time Paramedic
US&R and Tactical Communications Team Train with Bomb Squad

In mid-November, the Department of Public Safety’s Emergency Communications Division and Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) Team partnered with the County Sheriff’s Office Bomb and Hazardous Device Disposal Unit to host a nighttime drill with a complex scenario and multiple objectives. Prior to the start of the exercise, participants were told that a suspect with a known history of constructing homemade explosives had fled police to Simpson Island in the Schuylkill River with a victim that he had taken hostage.

US&R’s goals were two-fold: to provide safe transportation via boat for bomb technicians while at the same time performing water-based search and rescue for any potential victims. Field Comm 3 served as the Incident Command Post, coordinated all radio communications, and was staffed by personnel from the Tactical Communications Team. The Department of Public Safety would like to thank the Sheriff’s Office for a great exercise and Plymouth Community Ambulance Association for providing a medical standby!

State Reminds Fire Companies of Burn Training Requirements

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) is urging Pennsylvania volunteer fire departments to ensure that a credentialed State Academy Fire Instructor is on site to supervise any live burn trainings that include 17-year-old junior firefighters – as required by an amendment to the Child Labor Act that went into effect in January.

While Act 155 of 2022 now permits 17-year-old junior firefighters to take part in live-burn interior firefighting training exercises, such training may only be conducted under the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy (PSFA) training system’s interior firefighting training module and only when a certified instructor is on site at all times. These minors must also have permission from a fire chief and parent or guardian to participate in such training. Fire companies may be fined up to $5,000 per violation.

This reminder comes after L&I assessed fines against the Northumberland County Friendship Fire & Hose Co./Shamokin Fire Department for the fire companies’ failure to have a certified instructor on-site during a live burn training during which a 17-year-old volunteer firefighter suffering non-life-threatening burns. The Friendship Fire & Hose Co./Shamokin Fire Department was fined $1,000 for the violation.

This reminder is for fire companies participating in live burn evolutions outside of Montgomery County Fire Academy (MCFA) courses. All MCFA programming meets PSFA and L&I requirements.

Technology Division Reminds Agencies About Radio Installation

Any agency purchasing new mobile radios must have them calibrated and aligned by the Department of Public Safety’s radio repair shop prior to installation. If not completed prior to installation, agencies will have to have the radio removed, calibrated, and aligned prior to programming. With questions, contact Assistant Director Rick Lohwasser at Rick.Lohwasser@montgomerycountypa.gov.
Department-Funded CO Meters Alert Responders in Upper Dublin Township Incident

The Department of Public Safety was pleased to be notified by the Second Alarmers Rescue Squad about a recent success story involving a Department-funded Carbon Monoxide (CO) meter. Every frontline ambulance and ALS squad in Montgomery County carries at least two CO meters which are intended to alert EMS personnel if the odorless, colorless gas reaches dangerous levels inside a structure.

On November 17th, police and EMS were dispatched to a report of a fall victim in Upper Dublin Township. After receiving an update that the subject was unconscious, a crew from Second Alarmers entered the building to assess the patient. Immediately, the Carbon Monoxide meter that the crew had clipped to their first-in bag started beeping, notifying the crew and police officers to evacuate until fire department personnel arrived with proper respiratory protection.

This meter is one of 240 across Montgomery County that was purchased utilizing Homeland Security Grant Program funding and distributed to 23 EMS agencies last fall. As of November 30th at 7:00 a.m., the Department of Public Safety had received calls for and dispatched 966 Carbon Monoxide incidents (FCM-SYM and FCM-NOS) so far in 2023. November has been the busiest month, by far, with 123 incidents, an average of 4.2 per day. Other busy months include July (100 incidents), October (96), and September (95). CO issues occur year-round so be sure to bring meters inside whether it’s hot and sunny or cold and snowy!

Motorola Issues End of Repair Support Notice for Certain Radios

On September 26th, Motorola issued an End of Repair Support Notice, which they provided to the Department of Public Safety on October 9th. The notice reads, in part:

“Due to higher than expected demand, the goal of extending APX 6000 AN, APX 6000XE AN and SRX2200 AN flat rate repair support for control top and chassis failures through December 31, 2023 is being amended. Flat rate repair support for control tops and chassis components will end September 26, 2023. For those devices that currently have a RMA number and already have been shipped to Motorola and cannot be repaired, the device will be returned to the customer and no service charges will apply.”

To read the entire document, check it out in the November Notices. This article was first published in the October edition of Public Safety News (publish date: 10/31/2023).

Electronic Naloxone Request Form Now Available

Utilizing grant funding from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety distributes Narcan® (naloxone) nasal spray for use in response to opioid overdoses. First responders and other pre-approved organizations can receive Narcan® through this grant. To request a supply of Narcan®, approved organizations can click this link: Request Narcan® Here. After the Department of Public Safety approves or rejects the request, the requestor will receive an email.