DPS Hosts Legislators Considering Critical 911 Funding Increase

On December 6th, the Department of Public Safety hosted several members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee for a tour and informational meeting (right) at the Emergency Operations Center. Two DPS staff, First Deputy Director Brian McKown (below, right) and Deputy Director Jennifer Cass (below, left), testified in front of the committee on the importance of increasing funding and support for 9-1-1 centers across the Commonwealth, particularly during the ongoing upgrade to Next Generation 911 (NG911). The Department of Public Safety would like to thank Committee Chair Representative Jared Solomon, Representative Gregory Scott, and their staff for making this opportunity happen and bringing attention to this issue.

Currently, much of the Department of Public Safety’s operational budget is funded by the statewide 9-1-1 phone surcharge, which all phone subscribers pay monthly as part of their regular bill. The fees are collected by the telecommunications providers, submitted to PEMA, and are then distributed to the counties. The fee, which currently stands at $1.65 per line per month, was set back in 2015 and was not adjusted for the cost of living in the past eight years. Over that same period of time, the costs to run a 9-1-1 center have increased dramatically, encompassing everything from personnel and utilities to equipment and technology upgrades. Without reauthorization, the surcharge was set to expire at the end of January 2024.

Seven days later, on Tuesday, December 13th, Governor Shapiro signed a bill reauthorizing the monthly surcharge and increasing it to $1.95 ($0.30 increase) effective March 1, 2024 through January 31, 2026. This increase is expected to generate an estimated additional $60 million per full fiscal year for Pennsylvania’s 9-1-1 centers. The Department of Public Safety commends and thanks Governor Shapiro and the members of the General Assembly who worked to secure this critical funding.

Fire Officer Updates

Any fire companies with officer updates for 2024 should email them to Dennis Orangers at Dennis.Orangers@montgomerycountypa.gov. Please submit them as soon as possible to allow for timely implementation of any changes.
Firefighters Graduate from Entry Level Training Program

On Thursday, December 21st, the 24 members of Montgomery County Fire Academy Class 2303 graduated from the Pennsylvania Entry Level Firefighter Training Program. They will go on to protect their communities as firefighters in 17 volunteer and combination fire companies in Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware counties.

Robert Carovillano, Deputy Director of Public Safety for Fire Programs, provided the opening remarks and Adam Thiel, Commissioner of the Philadelphia Fire Department, gave the commencement address.

Congratulations to the following graduates:

- Firefighter Daniel Allard, Fame Fire Co
- Firefighter Caitlin Asbert, Royersford Fire Dept
- Firefighter Evan Baird, Upper Pottsgrove Twp Fire Co
- Firefighter Sarah Blatt, Glenside Fire Co
- Firefighter Alanah Carroll, Royersford Fire Dept
- Firefighter Beckem Cole, Goodwill Steam Fire Engine Co
- Firefighter Alexander Cosentino, Middletown Fire Co
- Firefighter Joseph Daywalt, Norriton Fire Engine Co
- Firefighter Benjamin Ford, Upper Frederick Twp Fire Co
- Firefighter James Heller, Gladwyne Fire Co
- Firefighter Isaak Herb, Gilbertsville Fire and Rescue Co
- Firefighter Caitlyn Herman, Upper Frederick Twp Fire Co
- Firefighter Jozef Jelski, Limerick Fire Dept
- Firefighter Kimberly Linette, Spring Mill Fire Co
- Firefighter Bridget Maier, Norriton Fire Engine Co
- Firefighter Michael Monahan, Barren Hill Fire Co
- Firefighter Timothy Murphy Jr., Barren Hill Fire Co
- Firefighter Jeremy Neiman, Gilbertsville Fire and Rescue Co
- Firefighter Mason Pelchat, Spring Mill Fire Co
- Firefighter Stephen Plotkin, Harmonville Fire Co
- Firefighter Jesse Ryder, Philadelphia Steam Fire Engine Co
- Firefighter Anthony Spinosa, Glenside Fire Co
- Firefighter Alexandru Vasilescu, South Media Fire Co
- Firefighter Joseph Zapien, Good Will Fire Co

The recipients of the Academic Achievement Award were Firefighter Daniel Allard of the Fame Fire Company and Firefighter Alexandru Vasilescu of the South Media Fire Company. Great job to all!
Department of Public Safety Adds Collapse 20-1 to Fleet

Please welcome Collapse 20-1 to the Department of Public Safety’s fleet! In 2019, Montgomery County Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) Team leadership identified the need for a vehicle that could transport personnel and equipment to water rescues but, at a moment’s notice, respond to a structural collapse, technical rescue, or other incident that occurs during a storm.

The new truck is a 2022 Ford F550 4x4 with a 12’ long by 8’ wide rescue-style body. It features a specialized suspension package that allows the vehicle to travel through flooded roadways and over rough terrain.

Collapse 20-1 was designed to be a rapid-response unit capable of handling the early stages of a wide variety of incident types. Its robust cache contains equipment for structural shoring, structural triage, lifting and moving heavy objects, technical search, subject vs. machine, rescue at height, and water-related incidents.

Department Recognizes Generous Thanksgiving Food Donors

The Department of Public Safety would like to sincerely thank the Perkiomen Township Fire Company and Collegeville Italian Bakery for keeping our 9-1-1 Telecommunicators well fed on Thanksgiving! Happy Holidays!

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.
US&R’s Memphis Recertified in Search and Rescue

On December 1st, one of the friendliest faces on the Montgomery County US&R Team traveled to New Jersey to get recertified in live find (live human scent detection). Memphis, our nine-year-old Chocolate Lab (right and below, right), completed her third 3-year FEMA certification, passing with 100% on six out of six skills. She has held this certification since she was three!

US&R dogs are trained to search collapsed structures that may be difficult for human rescue workers to access. Memphis can even climb ladders (better than some adults) to access second floors or other locations if required. US&R dogs play a vital role in search and rescue operations, and we could not be prouder of our four-legged team member!

While Memphis has many amazing skills, unfortunately she cannot drive a car or truck. We’d be remiss if we didn’t recognize the dedication of US&R Canine Specialist Thomas Brown, who trains with Memphis every day of the year and, at a moment’s notice, gets her where she needs to go to save lives.

In addition to being a member of Montgomery County US&R, Memphis is rostered as a federal US&R dog and has deployed up and down the East Coast with Pennsylvania Task Force 1. She is also a big sister to two-year-old Surf (left), who she is helping to train to follow in her footsteps. If you have the opportunity to see Memphis or Surf at a public event, be ready...they are a handful!

Congratulations to Memphis and Canine Specialist Brown on this significant achievement!

Department of Public Safety Assists with Table Top Exercise

This month, Division of Emergency Management staff worked with Montgomery Township to plan and execute a Table Top Exercise revolving around the Township’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and a simulated tornado that impacted the area. Thanks to our hosts for engaging in this important work! Agencies interested in assistance in holding a similar exercise may contact Training and Preparedness Coordinator Amanda Brady at Amanda.Brady@montgomerycountypa.gov.
Emergency Managers Earn PEMA Certifications

Over the past month, several emergency management professionals across Montgomery County were presented with their well-deserved PEMA certifications. Interested in pursuing your own emergency management certs? Contact Training and Preparedness Coordinator Amanda Brady at Amanda.Brady@montgomerycountypa.gov to get started today! Congratulations to the following individuals:

- Martin Joyce, MCDPS, Basic Certification (right)
- Daniel Miller, Abington Township, Basic Certification
- Rebecca Werner, Whitemarsh Township, Basic Certification

Save the Date for Upcoming Fire Academy Programs

Ice Rescue and Emergency Response

Registration remains 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.

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.
Many thanks to the members of the Glenside Fire Company for taking a tour of our Special Operations Substation and Logistics Warehouse in Fort Washington this month! Interested in bringing your agency to check out one of our facilities? Send us a direct message or email publicsafety@montgomerycountypa.gov.

Happy Holidays from our Tactical Communications Team! This specially trained group of experienced Telecommunicators is ready 24/7/365 to deploy anywhere in the County to support our local first responders. At their end-of-year meeting this month, members of the TCT received an overview of the capabilities of the new Field Comm. The new unit will go in service any day now now!

Recently, the Department of Public Safety partnered with Parkhouse Providence Pointe and Upper Providence Township to test evacuation/deployment plans and the activation/deployment of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Bureau of EMS Mass Surge Equipment Cache. Several representatives from ten agencies participated in the exercise.
Department of Public Safety Personnel Changes

Amanda Hoade recently started as the Fire Academy’s new Rescue Training Coordinator after working for several years in fire/EMS, most recently for Bristol Township, Bucks County. Her background is in education, graduating from West Chester University with dual bachelor’s degrees. She spent several years teaching special education, specifically working with students with learning disabilities as well as visual impairments. Amanda is a 20-year volunteer with Upper Gwynedd Fire Department, currently serving as both President and Chief Engineer. While her role as Rescue Training Coordinator is new, Amanda is not a new face around the Academy. She has been an adjunct instructor for the EMT programs and teaches for the Bucks County Fire Academy as well. When not working, Amanda likes to spend time with her Dalmatian, Odin.

Amanda.Hoade@montgomerycountypa.gov | (610) 278-3500 ext. 6602
Public Safety Training Campus

HazMat Team Tours PECO West Conshohocken Facility

On December 12th, members of the Montgomery County Hazardous Materials Response Team toured PECO’s West Conshohocken Gas Operations Center, an essential component of southeastern Pennsylvania’s utility infrastructure.

Each year as part of their regular training schedule, the HazMat team visits a few facilities in Montgomery County that store or use hazardous materials. This allows our technicians to explore facility layouts, learn local procedures, and meet key players in a low stress environment. Our intent when scheduling a tour is to improve coordination, streamline communication, and enhance situational awareness in the unlikely event that a hazardous materials incident occurs at that location. Thanks to PECO for this valuable opportunity!

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 December Notices. This article was first published in the October edition of Public Safety News (publish date: 10/31/2023).
US&R Team Hosts Annual Heavy Equipment Rigging Drill

On November 28th, in the cold and wind, 20 members of the Montgomery County Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) Team attended their annual heavy equipment rigging drill. US&R has ten FEMA-certified Heavy Equipment and Rigging Specialists (HERS), each of whom is trained to calculate loads of objects that must be lifted either by crane or other heavy equipment to complete a rescue.

To ensure safety and due to the nature of these types of operations, the process they follow is highly complex and detailed. On an incident or during training, HERS-certified members are integrated into squads with other rescue specialists who support them and/or work under their direction. Two ten-person squads were initially assigned the following tasks: perform a crane inspection, complete a use order form, and build a rigging action plan. Each squad then had to contend with individual operational areas, each requiring four or five lifts of items varying in shape, material type, and mass.

Members had to calculate the weight of each object to confirm that the lift was within the crane’s load chart while also estimating the object's center of gravity to ensure it would lift evenly. Squads then had to prioritize their lifts based on how the objects were piled while communicating with each other and with the crane operator. The Department of Public Safety would like to sincerely thank The Crane Man, Inc. and Peter Nieves-Sosa for supplying and operating the crane!

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 2023.

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.
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.

**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

**Happy New Year from the Department of Public Safety!**