Telecommunicator and Trainee of the Year Honored at County Commissioners Meeting

On April 18th, as part of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, two very deserving staff were honored at the Montgomery County Commissioners’ Meeting. The 2023 Telecommunicator of the Year is Christopher Ott and the 2023 Trainee of the Year is Felicia Wittenberger. Way to go Chris and Felicia!

Chris’s supervisors and coworkers submitted the following comments about him:

Chris is a hard worker and a pleasure to work with. He is patient, kind, and funny. Chris loves working for the people and being able to help them during a tough time. The supervisors can rely on Chris to help his peers. He is dedicated and an employee they can always count on. Chris mentors many people and fills that challenging CTO role helping new 9-1-1 calltakers to love what we do. We are lucky to have Chris and to have him pass on his knowledge and experience to new generations of Telecommunicators. If you are having a rough day you can turn to Chris, he has a lot of jokes and laughter that can brighten anyone’s day. He occasionally sings a good song which makes coming to work a meaningful day to look forward to. Chris truly cares about the job and the community he serves. This is evident in his calm, consistent performance. His perception, understanding, and compassion have and will continue to save lives. Chris is the epitome of what it means to be “dedicated to your craft”.

Felicia’s supervisors and coworkers submitted the following comments about her:

From the first day of class, Felicia “gets it.” It is in her blood. She is from a family of law enforcement. Felicia has been a natural since day one. Aside from her natural understanding of this job, she has an amazing personality. Always smiling and in a good mood. It is truly a pleasure having her on our shift and interacting with her on a daily basis. Felicia is respectful and has a great work ethic. She is smart and will go far! Felicia has passion for the job and is always smiling and upbeat. She has a positive, professional presence. Her accuracy and ability to effectively communicate with callers, coworkers, and field units always boosts morale. A positive energy that makes her a pleasure to work with every day.

Congratulations to Chris and Felicia! Thank you both for all of your hard work and dedication!
MCORT Partners with Montgomery Township Police

The Montgomery Township Police Department and the Montgomery County Overdose Response Team (MCORT) recently partnered in a two-part program that will ensure better access to Naloxone and other overdose support services for township residents and visitors.

First, beginning Monday, April 29th, anyone can pick up a free dose of Naloxone, 24 hours a day, at the Montgomery Township Police Department, located at 1001 Stump Road, Montgomeryville, PA 18936 (no ID or proof of residency required). Simply let the staff member on duty know that you’re there to pick up Naloxone.

Second, MTPD and MCORT have come to an agreement that MCORT can automatically deploy to any overdose with relevant notes in the township during MCORT’s operational hours. This will speed up responses to incidents in Montgomery Township and allow responders to provide more seamless care for individuals who have experienced an overdose event.

To learn more about MCORT, visit https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/4305/Montgomery-County-Overdose-Response-Team or email MIH Coordinator Jonathan Serbin at Jonathan.Serbin@montgomerycountypa.gov.

Emergency Communications Center Adds Location Tool

The Department of Public Safety’s Emergency Communications Center recently adopted a new application called “what3words” as an additional tool to locate individuals in an emergency and relay that information to responders. what3words divided the world into 57 trillion 3-meter squares and gave each square a unique combination of three words as an identifier. For example, the American flag outside the main entrance to the Emergency Operations Center is located at ///advised.remove.infants.

If an individual calling 9-1-1 is having difficulty portraying where they are and the cellular data isn’t accurate enough to provide a location, the three words can be given to the 9-1-1 calltaker to help determine where the caller is located. In turn, this will allow the appropriate resources to be dispatched in a timely manner. From time to time, dispatchers may also provide these three words to responders in the field to help them pinpoint an exact incident location.

Since adoption, the Emergency Communications Center has already had a few success stories using what3words. Most recently, Department of Public Safety dispatchers were able to direct first responders to a brush fire on the Overlook Trail in Evansburg State Park in Lower Providence Township. The agencies involved were able to type ///saying.margins.grow into the what3words website or app, get a precise location for the caller, and formulate their best access to the incident. To learn more about what3words, visit https://what3words.com/about.

Disclaimer: what3words does not take place of and will not be used prior to the Emergency Communication Center’s traditional call handling and location verification methods.
The Department of Public Safety would like to extend a sincere thank you to all of the individuals and organizations that donated in support of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week:

Chick-fil-A Audubon
Collegville Borough Police Department
Franconia Township Police Department
Police Benevolent Association
King of Prussia Volunteer Fire Company
Lower Providence Police Association
Lower Providence Township Police Department
MCM Consulting Group
Motorola
Montgomery County Fire Chiefs Association
Montgomery County Municipal Fire Officers Association
Montgomery Township Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 4890
Montgomery Township Police Department
Mr. Nate Statum
Norristown Fire Department
Senator Tracy Pennycuick
Swedeland Volunteer Fire Company
Swedesburg Volunteer Fire Company
Towamencin Township Police Department
Upper Merion Township Fire & EMS
Upper Moreland Township Police Benevolent Association
Upper Moreland Police Department
Upper Pottsgrove Township Police Department
Upper Providence Township Fire & Emergency Services
Upper Providence Township Police Department
VMSC - Lansdale
Whitemarsh Township Police Department
Whitpain Township Police Department

Recently, the Montgomery County Fire Chiefs’ Association has been working on compiling a water supply report regarding fire companies participating in the Tanker and Large Diameter Hose (LDH) Strike Teams. For tankers, the Chiefs who produced the report compiled the tank capacity (in gallons), the tank dump time, and average fill time. For LDH engines, the pump size (in gallons per minute), hose capacity (feet of supply line), and number of 6”x10’ sections of hard sleeve hose carried are listed.

With questions, contact New Hanover Township Fire Marshal William Moyer at firemarshal@newhanover-pa.org. The document is included in the April Monthly Notices and can be downloaded at www.montgomerycountypa.gov/tankerLDH. The Dept. of Public Safety is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained therein.
Emergency Management Completes Foam Collection Program

On Tuesday, April 23\textsuperscript{rd}, the Department of Public Safety’s Special Operations responders and Emergency Management Division staff were hard at work getting dangerous chemicals off the street. Utilizing $97,609 of Hazardous Materials Response Fund grant money, fire companies across the County were provided the opportunity to safely dispose of old firefighting foam containing PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), free of charge. By removing this funding obstacle, fire companies will be able to devote their resources to purchasing new environmentally friendly non-PFAS (fluorine-free) foam. 3,615 gallons of foam was collected from 22 fire companies, the Fire Academy, and the HazMat Team.

Interoperability Established with Pennsylvania Turnpike

The Department of Public Safety has been working with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission on an interoperability project that will allow first responders in Montgomery County to communicate directly with the Traffic Operations Center in Highspire using County radios. This will eliminate the need for fire and EMS agencies to maintain additional Turnpike radios and equipment in apparatus. The County’s Emergency Communications Center and field personnel will have separate dedicated talkgroups that are interconnected with PTC District 4 and PTC District 5 for regular operations, as well as PTC OPS_3 which can be assigned for major incidents.

Over the next few weeks, Department of Public Safety staff will be reaching out to the fire and EMS agencies contracted for response on the Turnpike in order to program the new talkgroups into their radios. As other agencies throughout the County have maintenance or reprogramming done, the PTC talkgroups will be added to those radios as well, with the eventual goal of having Turnpike interoperability in all radios in Montgomery County.

US&R Team Creates Informational Flyer for Collapse 20-1

Recently, the Montgomery County Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) Team developed a Collapse 20-1 informational flyer to highlight the new truck’s capabilities and all-hazards nature. Collapse 20-1 was designed following the US&R Team’s deployment during Hurricane Ida in 2021. The Department of Public Safety identified the need for a truck that, at a moment’s notice, could respond to any technical rescue incident, from flooding to a tornado. The flyer is included in the April Monthly Notices.
April Anecdotes

On Wednesday, April 17th, the Department of Public Safety was proud to display the new HazMat 81 at the Southeastern Pennsylvania BioWatch Conference. The event brought together professionals from healthcare, public health, emergency services/management, and hazardous materials mitigation to discuss bioterrorism response.

On Wednesday, April 17th, emergency management coordinators and staff from across Montgomery County came together for a debris management workshop and tabletop exercise presented by CERES Environmental and DebrisTech. The Department of Public Safety has a contract with these firms to provide debris collection and monitoring in the event of a major storm.

Recently, members of the US&R Team completed their biennial emergency vehicle operations refresher. While there are numerous rescue disciplines and skills that members need to practice regularly to stay proficient in, the first priority of any response involves getting vehicles and personnel to the scene safely.
HazMat Team Trains with Upper Gwynedd Fire Department

On Monday, April 1st, the Hazardous Materials Response Team conducted a foam operations awareness session with the Upper Gwynedd Township Fire Department. To start the evening, team members reviewed foam strategies and tactics and provided an overview of Montgomery County’s Foam Task Force. Then, firefighters and HazMat Technicians practiced deploying environmentally friendly, non-PFAS training foam from Foam 81, using both the deck gun and 1.75” handline. Thanks to Station 80 for hosting this training!

US&R Team Practices Infrequently Used Skills

On April 10th, members of the Urban Search & Rescue Team spent an evening training on some skills that are used infrequently but nonetheless are extremely important to be proficient in. The first topic was the proper installation of both wedge and concrete screw anchors, which can support loads of approximately 2,000 lbs.

Members then had to create a rescue plan to move a 1,200 lb. concrete slab from an elevated height to grade, and then move it horizontally 25’ up a hill. They opted to utilize a griphoist, carried on both Collapse 20 and Collapse 20-1, to easily pull the slab up the hill to its final resting spot.

Fire Academy Hosting Summer Essentials Class

Are you a new firefighter or a student planning to be home for the summer who wants to complete your Firefighter I certification, while keeping your evenings and weekends free?

The Montgomery County Fire Academy is hosting Summer Essentials, which will include all four modules of the Pennsylvania Entry Level Firefighter Program and will conclude with Firefighter I certification written and practical testing. Classes will be held Mondays through Thursdays, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., from May 13th until July 2nd (excluding County holidays). Lunch is not provided as part of this course.

To register, visit https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/FormCenter/Emergency-Services-4/Montgomery-County-Fire-Academy-Course-Re-436
Department of Public Safety Personnel Changes

On Monday, April 8th, Al Aiken, Katie Christie, Danielle Cuadrado, Aubrey Davis (top row, left to right), Jenna Dolewa, Kaitlyn Freed, Diavah Lindsay, Erin Smith (middle row, left to right), Alex Spilove, Isabella Talarico, Mike Taylor, and Andrew Williams (bottom row, left to right) recently became the Department of Public Safety’s newest 9-1-1 Telecommunicator Trainees.

Over the next several weeks, the members of Class 109 will undergo rigorous classroom training in emergency calltaking and dispatch, before starting several more weeks of on-the-job training in the Emergency Communications Center. Congratulations and welcome to our newest employees!

Registration Open for Accelerated Summer EMT Program

Looking to further your career in emergency services? Registration is now open for the Department of Public Safety’s accelerated summer Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training program!

The class meets on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. between June 10th and August 8th. Each week will consist of three in-person days at the Public Safety Training Campus (1175 Conshohocken Rd, Conshohocken, PA 19428) and one virtual day. The cost of the course is $1,000.

To register, visit http://emstrainingcenter.org/ (Deadline: May 20th). For additional information, see the flyer in the April Monthly Notices.
Montgomery County Commissioners
Jamila H. Winder
Neil K. Makhija
Thomas DiBello

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.

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 and approved for unrestricted medical command authorization by the DPS Chief Medical Officer. Available positions:

- **Full-Time EMT**
- **Full-Time Paramedic**
- **Part-Time Paramedic**

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.

Fire Academy Hosts Training for Upper Merion Firefighter Recruits

In late April, the Department of Public Safety supported the Upper Merion Township Fire & EMS Department as they trained their new Firefighter/EMT recruits. Operating out of the new Field Comm 1, the Tactical Communications Team provided simulated dispatches while firefighters responded to incidents on the grounds of the Fire Academy.