Severe Storm Response and Recovery

In the late afternoon hours of Wednesday, May 29th, lines of severe thunderstorms impacted Montgomery County, causing significant damage in Upper Salford Township, Lower Frederick Township, and surrounding municipalities. Strong winds toppled trees and brought down power lines, causing numerous road closures and damaging dozens of structures.

At 5:38 PM, Field Comm 3 and the Tactical Communications Team were requested to respond to support operations at an Incident Command Post (ICP) and staging area at the Upper Salford Volunteer Fire Company. Montgomery County Emergency Management staff and the Montgomery County Incident Support Team then responded to the ICP to provide planning and logistics assistance to the fire chief and township Emergency Management Coordinator.

Debris and downed electrical lines rendered many areas inaccessible via regular response apparatus, so command staff decided to utilize specialized search teams and all-terrain vehicles. The Montgomery County and Delaware County Urban Search and Rescue Teams and the Chester County Rescue Task Force were sent into the field to get an initial report on damage and to search for any individuals who were injured or cut off from outside assistance by the storms.

The Montgomery County Emergency Operations Center activated on Wednesday night, and then again on Thursday and Friday during the day to support and coordinate response and recovery operations. Numerous Department of Public Safety assets were deployed into the field, including (2) ATVs, SAT COMM 1, (2) variable message boards, (6) light towers, (6) Gridless Core Battery Packs, and (2) Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).

On Thursday, May 30th, teams from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and Delaware County Emergency Services assisted the Department of Public Safety with the performance of damage assessment. At the same time, specialists from the National Weather Service arrived to gather evidence concerning the cause of the damage. The Department of Public Safety used UAV camera footage to assist in the investigation.

By Thursday night, crews from PennDOT, municipal public works, and PECO had cleared most major roads of debris and wires, and had restored power to most of the
affected area. However, numerous secondary and tertiary roads remained closed. Three schools were closed due to lack of power and bus schedules were suspended for several days in areas where it was too dangerous for safe passage.

As of 1 PM on Friday, May 31st, the following damage had been reported to the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety. Note that this accounts for damage only in Upper Salford and Lower Frederick Townships.

By Friday evening, the National Weather Service – Mt. Holly published the following Public Information Statement:

Severe thunderstorms moved through Lower Frederick and Upper Salford Townships in Montgomery County between 4:55 and 5:00 PM on Wednesday, May 29...

...Severe winds from these thunderstorms felled thousands of trees and damaged numerous homes, sheds, and automobiles in the area. Thankfully, no deaths or serious injuries were reported as a result of these storms.

Based on a survey by a team of meteorologists from the National Weather Service in Mount Holly, NJ, both at ground level and from aerial footage, as well as velocity and reflectivity signatures from Doppler radar and eyewitness accounts, straight-line winds with speeds between 90 and 100 mph were determined to be the cause of all this damage. No evidence of tornadic activity was found in the area; the path of damage is consistent with straight line winds.

Representatives from the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Montgomery County Animal Response Team, Montgomery County Physician Response Team, Montgomery County Police Chiefs’ Association Mutual Aid Committee and several municipal police departments, Plymouth Community Ambulance Association, Harleysville Area Emergency Medical Services, Pennsylvania State Police, and North Penn Goodwill Service also responded to assist. In addition, GIANT and Walmart stores in Harleysville generously provided bottled water for both responders and residents.

The Department of Public Safety would like to thank all of the agencies that assisted in the response to this incident. The recovery process is ongoing.
Grant Secured for Additional Automatic License Plate Readers

The Department of Public Safety recently secured a Homeland Security grant for the purchase of (4) additional Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPR) for Montgomery County law enforcement agencies in 2019. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force ALPR initiative now has 137 ALPR units in the system, with approximately 100 funded through the Task Force.

In May 2019, there were a total of 7,649,917 ALPR reads within the Southeastern Pennsylvania region (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Philadelphia, and Montgomery Counties). Montgomery County units had the second highest number of reads in the region, with 1,751,035 (Philadelphia led with 2,736,524 reads).

29-21 (Abington Police Department) led Montgomery County with 220,915 reads, followed by 52-28 (Norristown Police Department) with 168,670. The Department of Public Safety would like to thank all participating agencies.

For additional information, contact Jesse Stemple at jstemple@montcopa.org.

Students Complete Water Rescue Training

Twelve Montgomery County Fire Academy students recently completed the challenging Advanced Line Systems Rescue training on the Schuylkill River. This technician-level Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission course prepares responders for executing hazardous water rescues using advanced techniques including rope systems.

The Montgomery County Fire Academy offers the entire catalog of PA Fish and Boat water rescue courses and will be hosting three on-campus water rescue offerings this fall:

- Water Rescue for the First Responder (Awareness Level) – September 5th
- Water Rescue and Emergency Response (Operations Level) – September 11th, 16th, 18th and 22nd
- Advanced Line Systems Rescue (Technician Level) – November 23rd and 24th

For more information or to host a program at your organization, please contact Rescue Coordinator Rob Carovillano (rcarovillano@montcopa.org).
Department of Public Safety Retirement

On Friday, June 28th, Department of Public Safety School Safety Coordinator Steven A. Beck officially retired, completing 40 years of service as a law enforcement professional. Prior to his employment with Montgomery County, Steve served as a Lieutenant with the Lower Moreland Township Police Department. In this role, he was also the Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator for the township and Assistant Team Commander of the Moreland Area Special Weapons and Tactics Team for Eastern Montgomery County.

For the past 11 years, Steve has held the position of School Safety Coordinator. He was the first person to hold this position and established a set of school safety and security services, as well as avenues of communication and information for Montgomery County’s public schools, non-public schools, colleges, and universities.

Steve has worked extensively with all levels of schools in the areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

Over the years, he has provided hundreds of training sessions for thousands of school personnel, facilitated countless tabletop exercises and drills, held numerous site safety and security assessments, developed planning and preparedness capabilities, responded to school emergencies, and provided sound advice in all safety and security matters of concern.

The Department of Public Safety would like to thank Steve for his many years of service to Montgomery County, our schools, and our students. Best wishes for a safe, happy, and healthy retirement!

System Alert Notifications

When Verizon equipment, necessary to transmit radio signals to transmission towers, is experiencing outages, a System Alert Notification (SAN) will be issued so that all responders are aware of potentially diminished radio signals. When this occurs, Verizon is notified to respond and make repairs to their T-1 lines.

Recently, there has been an increase in the frequency of these disruptions and Verizon’s response has lacked urgency. This Department, along with our partner counties in Southeastern Pennsylvania, has scheduled meetings with Verizon to attempt to improve both the reliability of their equipment as well as their response times when issues do occur.
Entry Level Firefighter Graduation

On Wednesday, May 29th, 24 members of Montgomery County Fire Academy Class 1901 celebrated the completion of the Pennsylvania Entry Level Firefighter Training program with a graduation ceremony at the Public Safety Training Campus. Director of Public Safety Thomas M. Sullivan provided the commencement address.

These men and women will protect their communities as firefighters in 15 volunteer and combination fire companies in Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware Counties.

Firefighter Ethan Crovetti of the Skippack Fire Company in Montgomery County received the award for highest grade in Interior Firefighter.

Congratulations and best wishes for a safe career to the following graduates:

- Firefighter Ethan Crovetti, Skippack
- Firefighter Ezequiel Delcarmen, Telford
- Firefighter Francis Delvecchio, New Hanover
- Firefighter Nathaniel DiDonato, Worcester
- Firefighter Michael Donovan, Spring Mill
- Firefighter John Dougherty, Goshen
- Firefighter Jack Gross, Skippack
- Firefighter Jade Hale, Skippack
- Firefighter Kenneth Hamilton, Oakmont
- Firefighter Tyler Hamilton, Oakmont
- Firefighter Ilona Henderson, Goodwill
- Firefighter Khalil Holmes-Hodge, Telford
- Firefighter Nicholas Jennings, Spring Mill
- Firefighter Zachary Jurkovski, Telford
- Firefighter Allen King III, Spring Mill
- Firefighter Benjamin Leister, Royersford
- Firefighter Alexis Rozecki, Swedesburg
- Firefighter Austin Smith, Flourtown
- Firefighter Michael Stockbridge, Harmonville
- Firefighter Michael Talag, Oakmont
- Firefighter Dale Tyczka, Skippack
- Firefighter Stephen Vecchio, Oakmont
- Firefighter Wayne Wilkie, Edgemont Township
- Firefighter David Wilkie III, Edgemont Township
Firefighting: A Family Tradition

The volunteer fire service continues to be a family tradition in southeastern Pennsylvania. South Media volunteer firefighters Dora Giannakarios Preston and Ellen Yarborough, both 2018 graduates of the Montgomery County Fire Academy, saw their sons, Harrison Preston and Cameron Yarborough, graduate on May 15, 2019 with Class 1805.

On May 29th, father and son Kenneth and Tyler Hamilton of the Oakmont Fire Company (below, left) and brothers Wayne and David Wilke, Edgemont Township Fire Company (below, right), graduated with Class 1901.

First Responder Peer Support Hotline

FiRST (First Responder Support Team) is a Pennsylvania-based peer support hotline for all first responders and their families. The hotline is staffed by current and former police officers, firefighters, EMS providers, and 9-1-1 telecommunicators, offering peer support for:

- Job Stress
- Family Issues
- Financial Concerns
- Drug/Alcohol Issues

The call is 100% confidential and the hotline is available 24/7/365. No issue is too big or too small. If you have a concern about yourself, a coworker, a friend, or a family member please CALL, don't hesitate! Calls will be routed through the Lenape Valley Foundation Crisis center. Once you identify yourself as a first responder, you will be transferred to a volunteer Peer First Responder who will speak with you.
Career Opportunities

The Department of Public Safety is now accepting applications for the following positions:

The **Part Time Radiological Planner** is responsible for radiological emergency response planning and training. The Radiological Planner produces and reviews emergency plans for response to incidents at the Limerick Generating Station, and coordinates county, municipal, and school participation in associated drills.

This position requires attendance at evening and weekend meetings and is subject to 24 hour, 7-day call for weather, hazardous materials, and man-made emergencies in addition to Limerick Generating Station response.

**Telecommunicators** are the public's primary points of contact when requesting a response by public safety resources. They promote the Department's core values of integrity, respect, and customer service without compromise. Telecommunicators receive calls from the public and accurately assign requests for police, fire, emergency medical units, and other public safety resources.

Telecommunicators are considered "essential personnel" and will be required to report for work regardless of weather conditions.

To learn more about these positions or to apply now, visit [www.montcopa.org/jobs](http://www.montcopa.org/jobs).

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**JENKINTOWN, PA - Chief Albert DiValentino and JPD command staff address the media**

On Saturday, June 1st, the Jenkintown Police Department, in coordination with regional tactical teams, successfully apprehended a barricaded subject at the Beaver Hill Condominiums. MCDPS staff assisted with the execution of a press conference following the incident at the Jenkintown Borough Hall.
Pennsylvania Voluntary Rescue Service Recognition Program

In light of Limerick Fire Department’s recent renewal of their Advanced Level recognition in Vehicle and Machinery Rescue, the Department of Public Safety would like to acknowledge the other fire companies and departments in Montgomery County that are participating in the Pennsylvania Voluntary Rescue Service Recognition Program. These agencies have gone above and beyond what is required of them in order to ensure the highest level of service for their communities.

For additional information on this program, please see the June 2019 Notices, under General Announcements and Information.

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Clockwise, from top left: Rescue 51 (Limerick), Boat 24-1 and Boat 24-2 (Gladwyne), Rescue 65 (Pensburg), Squad 48 (Swedeland)