A Near Miss: The Importance of Blocking Traffic on Highways

On Wednesday, October 2nd at 14:44 hours, Stations 33 and 44 were dispatched to a reported vehicle fire at mile marker 21.7 southbound on the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Upon arrival at 14:50 hours, Chief 33 staged his vehicle on the shoulder, approximately 30 feet to the north of the incident, while Squad 33 was positioned to block the right-hand lane of travel for scene protection.

Chief 33 found a passenger vehicle being towed by a tow truck, parked on the shoulder with no apparent fire. Pennsylvania State Police and Turnpike safety vehicles had yet to arrive on scene. As Chief 33 and Captain 33-1 exited their vehicles to investigate and speak with the tow truck operator, an out-of-control minivan veered from the center lane into the right lane, striking the driver’s side rear bumper and side compartment of Squad 33. The vehicle then came to a stop on the shoulder approximately 200 feet south of the original incident.

At the time of impact, there were two firefighters on board Squad 33, the driver and one firefighter in a rear jump seat. The former was uninjured in the collision, while the latter suffered a minor back sprain. The driver of the striking vehicle was also hurt, sustaining cuts from flying glass. Chief 33, Captain 33-1, and the tow truck operator were also struck with flying glass but were uninjured. All were treated at the scene and released.

The driver of the striking vehicle stated to fire personnel that he fell asleep at the wheel. The vehicle was traveling at an estimated speed of 70 to 80 miles an hour at the time of impact.

"I am convinced that if there wasn’t a blocking vehicle in place at this incident there would have been serious injuries or fatalities,” said Lee Miller, Chief of the Centre Square Fire Company. Unfortunately, Squad 33 did sustain significant body damage and will be out of service for several weeks.

Incident details and pictures provided courtesy of Chief Lee Miller, Centre Square Fire Company.
Making Sense of Winter Weather Products

With winter just around the corner, Department of Public Safety staff would like to remind responders about three important seasonal products: Code Blue, the Weekly Winter Weather Outlook, and Situational Awareness Notices.

**Code Blue**

A Code Blue Cold Weather Health Emergency will be issued by the Department of Public Safety when the temperature and/or wind chill is expected to be at or below 20° Fahrenheit. A Code Blue may also be declared during special circumstances, such as when there is significant snowfall forecast with temperatures and wind chills just above the guidelines. During a Code Blue, multiple Montgomery County agencies and private health/social organizations will offer expanded services for those without adequate shelter, including the chronically homeless and homeless families with children. Residents of Montgomery County who need shelter during a Code Blue can call the Your Way Home Call Center at 2-1-1 or text 898-211.

**Weekly Winter Weather Outlook**

The Department of Public Safety distributes a Weekly Winter Weather Outlook on Tuesdays in November, December, January, February, and March. Using National Weather Service forecasts, Department of Public Safety staff will classify the probability of cold weather (temperature and/or wind chill at or below 20° F) and measurable winter precipitation for each day in the following week using a three-level scale: Unlikely, Possible, or Likely. The document is intended to provide advance awareness about impending winter weather that could trigger a Code Blue declaration or Emergency Operations Center activation.

The intended audience for the Outlook is Code Blue community shelter stakeholders, staff of various Montgomery County departments and offices, and municipal emergency management coordinators. The document is not intended to be released to the general public and is for operational planning purposes only.

**Situational Awareness Notices**

Prior to any significant weather event in their coverage area, the National Weather Service – Mt. Holly produces detailed briefing packages and sends them to county partners. Any package which has relevance to Montgomery County and describes a situation in which at least moderate impacts in the County are expected will be distributed by the Department of Public Safety to stakeholders as part of a Situational Awareness Notice. Note that many briefing packages produced by NWS – Mt. Holly are not considered relevant to Montgomery County responders. For example, some packages are issued for Coastal Flood Advisories, while others concern snow that will only affect the Poconos.

The Situational Awareness Notice will also include a Montgomery County-specific narrative of preparations, timing, and expected impacts. Should the event warrant a Watch Desk or Emergency Operations Center activation, Situational Awareness Notices will transition to Situation Reports.
Responders Complete Advanced Rescue Training

Advanced Line Systems Rescue Instructor Training

Four Montgomery County first responders recently completed the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) Advanced Line Systems Rescue instructor training program.

Advanced Line Systems Rescue is a technician-level water rescue program that trains students in assembling and operating rope-based rescue systems, Type V personal flotation device operations, and “go” rescues.

The training was held at PFBC H.R. Stackhouse Training Center in Bellefonte, PA and the Foster Joseph Sayers Dam in Bald Eagle State Park. The Fish and Boat Commission coordinated a dam release with the US Army Corp of Engineers to ensure adequate water conditions for the class.

The Montgomery County Fire Academy offers the complete catalog of PA Fish and Boat Water Rescue Classes:

- Water Rescue for the First Responder (Awareness Level)
- Ice Safety – Basic Survival & Rescue (Awareness Level)
- Water Rescue and Emergency Response (Operations Level)
- Emergency Boat Operations & Rescue (Technician Level)
- Ice Rescue and Emergency Response (Technician Level)
- Advanced Line Systems Rescue (Technician Level)

Contact Rob Carovillano, Rescue Training Coordinator, for more information or to schedule a class. Rob can be reached at rcarovillano@montcopa.org or (610) 278-3500 extension 6610.

Tower Rescue Technician

Earlier this month, the Montgomery County Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Team completed the final portion of the tower rescue technician program. Members were taught various climbing techniques on cell phone antennas, tower cranes, and fixed structures to heights of over 250 feet. Some of the skills they completed while at these heights include rescue of an authorized worker due to a medical emergency and removal/rescue of an unauthorized climber. These members are now fully certified as tower rescue technicians.

While these types of calls are not frequent, Montgomery County US&R strives to maintain a constant state of readiness to support our municipalities and regional partners. This course was physically and mentally trying and is an amazing achievement for all involved. Strong work by our US&R team members!
PECO Supports Firefighter Memorial

Prior to the semi-annual meeting of the Montgomery County Fire Advisory Committee on November 15th, PECO External Affairs Manager Suzanne Ryan presented a $2,000 check to Committee Chairperson John Kelly.

The funds will be used exclusively for the maintenance and improvement of the Montgomery County Firefighter Memorial, located outside at the west end of the Public Safety Training Campus.

The Department of Public Safety would like to thank PECO for their continued support!

Left to right: Matt Traynor, Jim Staufenberg, Frank Colelli, Mike Burton, John Kelly, Roy Nuss, Suzanne Ryan, Ken Shuler, Tom Garrity, George Wilmot, and Tom O’Donnell.

Montgomery County Firefighter Memorial

Department of Public Safety to Host Open Testing Day

On Saturday, December 7th, the Department of Public Safety will host an open testing day for telecommunicator applicants between 9 AM and 3 PM. No appointment is necessary. If you are interested in scheduling an appointment, contact Assistant Training Coordinator Maryann Longo at mlongo@montcopa.org or (610) 631-6512.

To apply ahead of time, visit www.montcopa.org/jobs, scroll down to Public Safety, and click on Telecommunicator.

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.
A Notable November

On Wednesday, November 6th, members of the Montgomery County Incident Support Team visited PEMA’s Commonwealth Response Coordination Center (CRCC) and Special Operations warehouse, home of the Pennsylvania All-Hazard Incident Management Team (PA-IMT), for a day of networking and coordination discussions.

On Thursday, November 14th, Department of Public Safety staff participated in a regional communications exercise at Talen Energy Stadium in Chester. The purpose of the drill was to test interoperability between the command and communications units operated by Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Philadelphia, and Montgomery Counties.

Many thanks to our Montgomery County responders who posed for #MoveOver photos this month. November 10th-16th was National Traffic Incident Response Week, which brings awareness to the hazards of incidents on the roadway and remembers the hundreds of emergency responders that are struck and killed by vehicles every year.
Local Responders Attend Counterterrorism Threat Brief

On Wednesday, November 6th, more than 60 local law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS, and emergency management personnel spent the morning at the Public Safety Training Campus with Federal Bureau of Investigation staff learning how to better protect their communities from the threat of terrorism.

FBI Philadelphia provided an overview of the evolving counterterrorism threat landscape. The briefing provided an overview of international and domestic terrorism threat movements and activities, as well as a summary of indicators an individual may be radicalizing or mobilizing to violence in furtherance of a terrorism agenda.

For additional information, contact Assistant Director of Homeland Security & Intelligence Dave Daugherty at (610) 631-6515 or ddaugherty@montcopa.org.

Firefighters Complete Basic Training

On Saturday, November 2nd, Montgomery County Fire Academy Class 1904 completed their required live-fire training. This training is an eight-hour section of the Interior Firefighter class – the fourth and final segment of entry level fire training. The class included a demonstration of smoke movement in a structure as well as multiple practical scenarios involving forcible entry, search, hose advancement, and fire control in both the residential and commercial structural burn buildings.

Firefighters today are trained to respond not only to fires but also to medical emergencies and hazardous material incidents. New firefighters in the Montgomery County entry level program receive training in first aid, CPR, Hazardous Materials Awareness, and Hazardous Materials Operations, and can test for three levels of national certification.

The members of Class 1904 will celebrate the completion of entry level fire training with a graduation at the Public Safety Training Campus on Wednesday, December 4th at 7 PM.

Fire/EMS Emailed Printouts Now Available

The Department of Public Safety has a new option available for receiving fire/EMS station printouts. Printouts can be delivered electronically via email to an email address of a department’s choice in lieu of receiving them on a physical printer. The same information contained in the printed version of the incident printout will be sent via email.

If any fire or EMS agency would like to switch to email based printouts instead of paper printouts, contact Dennis Orangers at doranger@montcopa.org. If making the switch it is recommended that agencies add mcdps@mcad911.com to their Safe Senders List or contacts list so that the printouts don’t end up in Spam or Junk Mail folders.
EMS Institute Seeks Reaccreditation

The Department of Public Safety Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Training Institute has been an Accredited Advanced Life Support Training Institute since 2013. The accreditation is awarded by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) after a thorough on-site inspection review and recommendation by the Committee on Accreditation for the EMS Professions (CoAEMSP). Every five years, Advanced Life Support - Paramedic Training Institutes across the country must be reviewed and meet the requirements to be re-accredited.

The Montgomery County EMS Training Institute completed the inspection process this month and will receive final accreditation determination on or before September 2020. The Institute is one of only 18 accredited sites in the Commonwealth, and one of only four in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Please stop by and visit the Training Institute when you are at the Public Safety Training Campus in Plymouth Township. The EMS Division is located on the second floor and can be contacted by calling (610) 278-2666.

Municipal Retirement

On Friday, November 1st, Cheltenham Township Fire Marshal Joseph O’Neill retired after providing more than four decades of dedicated service to several eastern Montgomery County communities.

Joe first began his career in emergency services as a volunteer firefighter at Wyndmoor Hose Company (Springfield Township) in 1976, where he would later serve as Chief.

He was then hired by the Upper Moreland Fire Department where he worked for 19 years, most recently as Fire Marshal and Director of Emergency Services. Since 2008, Joe has served as the Fire Marshal for Cheltenham Township.

Best wishes, Joe, on a safe, happy, and healthy retirement!
Department of Public Safety Personnel Changes

Erin Taylor was recently promoted to the position of Professional Development Coordinator. Erin has an extensive background in the field of education, teaching in elementary, middle, and high school before starting with the Department of Public Safety as a Telecommunicator 13 years ago. She has also served as a Communications Training Officer, and, most recently, as Assistant Training Coordinator for the past five years. In that role, Erin created and managed a 9-1-1 education program for elementary school students throughout Montgomery County. As Professional Development Coordinator, Erin will now be responsible for recruiting, hiring, and training new employees, as well as for providing continued education and maintaining training records for current telecommunicators.

etaylor@montcopa.org
(610) 631-6548
Emergency Operations Center

Matt Maillie recently accepted the position of Emergency Preparedness Specialist with the Department of Public Safety. Matt previously worked as the Emergency Management Planner for Tioga County, and continues to serve as a FEMA Reservist in their Hazard Mitigation Cadre. He’s an enlisted Infantryman with the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, and he holds a bachelor’s degree in Emergency Management from the Pennsylvania College of Technology.

mmaillie@montcopa.org
(610) 631-6513
Emergency Operations Center

Specialized Resource Profile

The Foam Task Force is a group of assets that specialize in the control of large-scale flammable liquid fires. The Task Force is composed of two Department of Public Safety foam response trailers deployed to fire companies, a Department of Public Safety foam engine housed at the Public Safety Training Campus, and a foam unit owned and operated by Station 61. In total, the Task Force carries approximately 2000 gallons of foam concentrate.

To request a response of the Foam Task Force, contact the Emergency Communications Center by radio or phone.
Command Officer Seminar Agenda Announced

The 17th annual Command Officer Seminar will be held on Saturday, January 25, 2020 at the Montgomery County Public Safety Training Campus. Light refreshments will be available starting at 8:00 AM, and the main program will begin at 8:30 AM.

Maximize your fire company’s learning experience by bringing not only your current leadership but your future leaders as well. Split up your team and cover all of the breakout sessions. Each person attending will receive a certificate indicating the CEUs earned.

The keynote address will feature Chief Robert Zoldos of the Durham (North Carolina) Fire Department. Chief Zoldos will speak about his department’s response to the Brightleaf Square explosion, which occurred on April 10th of this year and destroyed several buildings. Two civilians died and 25 people were injured, including nine firefighters. Chief Zoldos will share the challenges he and his department faced at this incident.

Breakout sessions will include:

- **Building Systems - And Their Impact on the Fire Ground**
  E.J. Henninger
  Captain, Gilbertsville Fire & Rescue Company
  Senior Project Designer, Genesis Engineers

- **How to Respond to Natural Gas Emergencies**
  Brian Focht
  PECO Energy

- **An Elevator Near Miss**
  Derek Thomas
  Trappe Fire Company
  International Union of Elevator Constructors, Local 5

- **The AFF Foam Fluorine Debate 2019**
  Jim Cottrell
  National Foam

- **119 Tennis Avenue, A Tree into a Home**
  Jay Leadbeater
  Chief, Wissahickon Fire Company
  ~ and ~
  The Montgomery County Urban Search and Rescue Team

The format this year is the same as last year’s seminar with breakout sessions before and after lunch. **Preregistration is required.** Contact Registrar Cindy Myers at cmyers@montcopa.org to register. There is no fee for this seminar.