Department of Public Safety Implements Closest Fire Unit Dispatch Policy

Following the successful implementation of a program utilizing GPS to identify and deploy the nearest ambulance, regardless of jurisdiction, to life-threatening Priority 1 calls, the Department of Public Safety undertook a study last year to determine whether or not the closest fire engine is responding to structure fires.

The project commenced with a detailed analysis of fire response procedures for the 1,091 emergency service zones (ESZ) across Montgomery County. It was determined that the engine located closest to the centroid point of each ESZ was not being dispatched in 48 of the 1091 zones (4.4%). Between May and November 2019, Department of Public Safety representatives held meetings with each of the fire agencies whose ESZs would be affected by a potential change. After these meetings and subsequent changes to response plans, the number of non-compliant ESZs was reduced to 11 (1%) by November. Effective January 25th, all ESZs in Montgomery County now have the closest engine responding on non-commercial and commercial building fires.

In order to share detailed information about the process and results of this project, Department of Public Safety staff have created an interactive ArcGIS Story Map. To view the product, visit https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/35cc572d8ca04e558f11fe6c03e72623.

The Department of Public Safety would like to thank all fire agencies for their support and cooperation during the implementation of this important initiative.

Responders Train for Emerging Threat

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there were 277 active shooter incidents in the United States from 2000 to 2018, in which 884 people lost their lives (not including the shooters). In just the two most recent years for which data is available (2017 and 2018), 223 people were killed, more than the first nine years of the data (2000-2008) combined. Of the total deaths in the 19 years for which data is available, more than 25% of them occurred in this two-year period.
In response to this deadly trend, the Department of Public Safety recently hosted the Active Threat Integrated Response Course at the Montgomery County Public Safety Training Campus (PSTC). 38 local responders completed the training, which was presented by the Louisiana State University’s National Center for Biomedical Research and Training (NCBRT). It is designed to improve coordination between law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel during active shooter incidents.

Two days of classroom instruction were followed by several real-time practical scenarios conducted around the PSTC. Simulation firearms, make-up, tourniquets, and fake blood were used to enhance the stress and realism for student-responders.

The Department of Public Safety would like to express gratitude to volunteers from the Montgomery County Medical Reserve Corps for serving as victims and role players, as well as the Volunteer Medical Service Corps of Lansdale, Whitemarsh Community Ambulance Association, and Second Alarmer’s Rescue Squad for providing ambulances and personnel for simulated patient transport. Thanks also to NCBRT’s instructors for a great course!

Data-Driven Response Analysis Available for the Fire Service

At the Command Officer Seminar on Saturday, January 25th, Department of Public Safety leadership shared some statistics regarding fire incidents in Montgomery County. In 2019, the Emergency Communications Center dispatched 8795 fire alarms (FAL), 124 (1.4%) of which were upgraded to building fires (FBL-CO or FBL-NCO). Only 31 (0.3%) of the 8795 alarms analyzed resulted in “working fire” dispatches. Of 1398 total building fires dispatched in 2019, there were 248 working fire dispatches (17.7%).

To view a dashboard with the detailed results of this analysis, visit https://montcopa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=4b9a23a042204b919aa503858dc22928. Department of Public Safety staff are currently working to create additional comprehensive dashboards which will be released later this year. These will give municipalities and first responders the ability to analyze their own data and take a strategic approach to future operations.

A short survey for fire companies and departments will also be forthcoming as the Department of Public Safety is assessing various areas related to emergency communications in order to better serve the fire service in Montgomery County. This survey should take less than five minutes to complete. The participation of all fire agencies would be greatly appreciated as the Department of Public Safety continues to strive for excellence in providing service and support.
Department of Public Safety Works Toward Point Addressing

In 2019, Department of Public Safety staff took important steps towards converting to a point addressing system for 9-1-1. Currently, when a 9-1-1 call is placed in Montgomery County, the Department of Public Safety’s Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system geocodes the address of the caller and places a point on the CAD’s map, which is used by both telecommunicators and field responders to locate emergency incidents. The CAD takes the reported address, searches for the range of addresses where the caller is located, and then approximates a geographic location based on the number of addresses possible and the length of the street segment.

For example, if someone calls from 125 Main Street and the range of address on the block is 100 to 151, a point will be dropped about halfway between the two cross streets (red dot). In reality, due to inconsistent spacing and clustering of structures (and addresses) in many areas, 125 Main Street may not be located exactly halfway between the two intersections. Imagine a block with tightly clustered rowhomes (blue rectangles) on one side and a large municipal park (green) on the other. As shown below (yellow star), 125 is much closer to one end of the block. Responders may have noticed discrepancies like the one displayed here while using the map function of their Mobile Data Computers (MDCs) to navigate to an incident.

The yellow star represents the accuracy that will be available to both telecommunicators and field users upon the completion of the point addressing project, which involves creating approximately 300,000 data points with valid addresses across Montgomery County. The point for each address will be placed exactly where the front door or main entrance of each structure is located, which will help improve response times for police, fire, and EMS. Point addressing will be available after the Department of Public Safety completes a comprehensive CAD upgrade, which is expected to occur later this year. Additional information will be shared as the project continues.

Department of Public Safety Personnel Changes

Brandon Pursell was recently promoted to the position of Hazardous Materials Program Coordinator. Brandon previously served as an intern with the Division of Emergency Management in the summer and fall of 2014, as Radiological Planner from January 2015 until September 2016, and as SARA Title III Reporting Specialist from September 2016 until January 2020. In his new role, Brandon will be responsible for managing the Montgomery County HazMat Planning Program, which involves planning for both fixed SARA Title III facilities and transportation hazards (roadway, rail, & waterway). In addition, he will serve as a Battalion Chief on the Hazardous Materials Response Team and will oversee training, equipment maintenance, asset inventory, billing, and cost recovery for the team.

bpursell@montcopa.org  (610) 631-6521  Emergency Operations Center
Regional Responders Prepare for Large Scale Emergency

After months of preparation, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force’s Emergency Response Workgroup hosted a tabletop exercise on Wednesday, January 22nd. The Task Force brings together representatives from Montgomery, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Philadelphia Counties to plan, train, and acquire equipment as a coordinated regional body. The Emergency Response Workgroup, a sub-unit of the Task Force, is focused on Emergency Medical Services (EMS), firefighting, Hazardous Materials (HazMat) response, and Urban Search & Rescue (US&R).

The scenario kicked off with a somewhat routine commercial building fire, discovered overnight at a manufacturing facility. However, the heat of the fire began to impact a tank containing hazardous materials at a neighboring facility, subsequently releasing toxic fumes into the air. Later in the day, a natural gas explosion leveled a row of homes nearby. Responders had to contend with a multitude of evolving hazards while considering regional interoperability, evacuation, mass care, and public information concerns.

The lessons learned from the tabletop will be used to plan and execute a regional full-scale exercise this summer.

International Student Visits the Emergency Operations Center

Xuduo “John” Wang (left) is a participant in the Swarthmore College externship program, which allows students to shadow and be mentored by professionals throughout the region. John, a member of Swarthmore’s Class of 2023 and graduate of the George School in Bucks County, spent a week of his winter break partnered with Upper Dublin Township Manager Paul A. Leonard (center) learning about local government in Pennsylvania.

John hails from the city of Shenyang, China, a metropolitan area of over eight million people located northwest of North Korea in mainland China. While visiting the Emergency Operations Center, he was impressed by the facility, the dedication of the telecommunicators, and the sheer volume of emergency calls.

Throughout the course of his week with Upper Dublin Township, John also spent time and rode along with the Upper Dublin Township Police Department and Second Alarmer’s Rescue Squad, which, along with his visit to the EOC, provided him with unique insights into emergency response here in Montgomery County. Thanks so much to Xuduo “John” Wang for spending time with us and to Paul Leonard for including us in his externship plan!
Montgomery County Special Operations Now Hiring

The Montgomery County Department of Public Safety is now hiring for multiple vacancies on the Hazardous Materials Response Team and Urban Search & Rescue Team. Positions on both teams are considered part-time employees of Montgomery County and will be compensated for incident response, training, and special events. Applications are due by close of business on Monday, February 10, 2020.

The **Hazardous Materials Responder** will respond to releases or potential releases of hazardous materials for the purposes of mitigating the hazard/threat. Hazardous Materials Responders are expected to use specialized chemical protective clothing, detection/identification instrumentation, and control equipment. This position is also responsible to staff apparatus for planned events as needed.

To apply for the Hazardous Materials Responder positions, click [here](https://www.montcopa.org/jobs) or visit [www.montcopa.org/jobs](http://www.montcopa.org/jobs) and scroll down to Public Safety.

The **Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Responder** will respond to technical rescue incidents involving, but not limited to rope rescue, trench rescue, structural collapse rescue, confined space rescue, technical search, and water rescue. US&R Responders are expected to operate specialized equipment, utilize personal protective equipment, and possess an in-depth working knowledge of technical rescue. This position is also responsible to staff apparatus for planned events as needed.

To apply for the Urban Search and Rescue Responder positions, click [here](https://www.montcopa.org/jobs) or visit [www.montcopa.org/jobs](http://www.montcopa.org/jobs) and scroll down to Public Safety.

Upcoming EMS Training Programs Announced

The Montgomery County Department of Public Safety – EMS Training Institute is offering several upcoming courses this spring and summer:

- **Paramedic Prep Course** (Mondays and Wednesdays 1900-2200, Saturdays 0800-1600, March 2nd-April 22nd)
- **Emergency Medical Responder** (Mondays and Wednesdays 1900-2200, Saturdays 0800-1600, March 16th-June 3rd)
- **Instructor Methodology Course** (Thurs 4/16, Sat 4/18, Sun 4/19, Tues 4/21, & Thurs 4/23, Tuesdays and Thursdays 1800-2200, Saturday and Sunday 0800-1700)
- **Paramedic** (Mondays and Wednesdays 1900-2200, Saturdays 0800-1600, May 18, 2020-December 16, 2021)
- **Emergency Medical Technician** (Monday-Thursday, 0800-1600, June 8th-August 6th)

All five courses will be held at the Public Safety Training Campus. For more information, see the January 2020 Notices. To register, visit [www.emstrainingcenter.org](http://www.emstrainingcenter.org).
On Wednesday, January 15th, over 50 members of the municipal emergency management community packed the EOC for a meeting and training session. In preparation for winter weather, representatives from PECO and the American Red Cross presented on their agencies’ storm and severe weather response plans.

On Wednesday, January 22nd, Division of Emergency Management staff conducted an active threat and hostage-themed Table-Top Exercise for the command staff of the Lower Providence Police Department as part of their annual supervisor in-service training.

On Thursday, January 23rd, Department of Public Safety EMS and School Safety staff conducted training for Montgomery County Community College nursing students on emergency preparedness, disaster patient triage, and active threat/shooter awareness.
Emergency Management Certifications Awarded

Over the past few months, several of our municipal partners and county staff were presented with their Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency certifications. Individuals involved in municipal or county emergency management in the Commonwealth can achieve certifications at three levels: basic, advanced, and professional. Each level requires the applicant to complete numerous training classes, as well as attend Department of Public Safety monthly meetings.

While appointed municipal Emergency Management Coordinators are required by Commonwealth law to obtain basic and advanced certifications, all levels are voluntary for other staff members. Despite this, many of our municipalities have gone above and beyond the requirements, certifying their Coordinators at the professional level and other staff at basic, advanced, or professional.

Anyone involved in municipal emergency management in Montgomery County who is interested in obtaining their PEMA certifications can contact Heather Stem at hstem@montcopa.org for additional information.

Individuals receiving their certifications this month include:

PEMA Advanced Level

Robert Carovillano, Montgomery County Department of Public Safety
Michael Rohlfing, Lower Providence Township
Beth Tavani, Montgomery County Department of Public Safety

PEMA Basic Level

Brendan Brazunas, Upper Merion Township
Leonard Brown, Royersford Borough
Blaine Leis, Upper Merion Township
Dave Lennon, Conshohocken Borough (above, center)
Don Lynch, Lower Salford Township (above, right)
Kevin Lynch, Jenkintown Borough
Jordan McCourry, Lower Providence Township
Chris Platz, Abington Township
Z. Raymond Sokolowski, Conshohocken Borough
John Zabinski, Montgomery County Department of Public Safety

FEMA Advanced Professional Series

Dennis Orangers, Montgomery County Department of Public Safety
Christopher Strange, Upper Moreland Township (above, left)
Fire Service Leaders Attend Command Officer Seminar

On Saturday, January 25th, over one hundred and fifty volunteer fire chiefs, assistant chiefs, and fire officers spent the day training and networking at the 17th Annual Command Officer Seminar at the Montgomery County Public Safety Training Campus.

Thomas M. Sullivan, Director of the Department of Public Safety, welcomed the attendees before members of his staff provided an update on recent department accomplishments as well as ongoing and planned initiatives.

Chief Robert Zoldos of the Durham, NC Fire Department then delivered an excellent keynote address, discussing the challenges that he faced on April 10, 2019 when a gas explosion leveled the Brightleaf Square complex in downtown Durham.

After Chief Zoldos’s presentation, the fire officers attended breakout sessions on a number of important topics, including:

- Building Systems - And Their Impact on the Fire Ground
- How to Respond to Natural Gas Emergencies
- An Elevator Near Miss
- The AFFF Foam Fluorine Debate 2019
- The 119 Tennis Avenue Rescue Operations
- Overview of the ARS Multi-Loop Rescue Strap

All attendees received a Multi-Loop Rescue Strap from Anderson Rescue Solutions and a certificate of attendance. Thanks to all of the fire officers who joined us!