Radio System Cutover Scheduled for December 8, 2020

The Department of Public Safety and Motorola are still on track to cut-over to the new 800 MHz radio system on Tuesday, December 8, 2020. More information, including specific instructions for field users on cut-over day and training material, will be forthcoming via Everbridge, email, and through the radio committees.

The rough plan for cut-over day is as follows:

- **Morning**: Police agencies will be cut-over to the new system, zone by zone.
- **Early Afternoon**: EMS agencies will be cut-over to the new system.
- **Mid-Afternoon**: Fire agencies will be cut-over to the new system.

These timeframes are estimates and are all subject to change. Updates and announcements via pager, new and old radio system, and email will be made throughout the day, alerting agencies of any status changes or necessary actions.

Once informed of the appropriate time to cut-over, an agency simply needs to switch all of their mobile and portable radios to the appropriate talkgroup on the “new” radio system radio banks, already present in the radios. This can be accomplished by pressing the “ZNUP” or “ZNDN” button on your radio until the desired radio bank is selected.

**UPDATE – APX-4000/4500 users**: The APX-4000 portable and APX-4500 mobile reprogramming effort is well underway. Department of Public Safety staff will continue to reprogram all necessary radios in order to ensure they will function on the new radio system. Thank you to all agencies who have accommodated our reprogramming team and altered your own schedules to help complete this massive endeavor.

As a reminder, all APX-6000 and 6500 radios have already been programmed with both systems and do not need to be reprogrammed prior to the cut-over date. Agencies with questions on the reprogramming may email EOCTech@montcopa.org or call (610) 631-6511.

Windows 7 End-of-Life for MDCs Announced

The Department of Public Safety recently completed a Pennsylvania State Police CLEAN (Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network) Technical Audit. To maintain CLEAN and CJIS (Criminal Justice Information Services) Compliance, as of July 1, 2021, Windows 7 based Mobile Data Computers (MDCs) will no longer be permitted to connect to the Public Safety network for CAD or MPS (Mobile for Public Safety). All MDCs (police, fire and EMS) must be upgraded to Windows 10 Pro prior to this date.

If you are still using Windows 7 after June 30, 2021, your computer will be blocked from the network. If your hardware is aging, now is the time to start planning for replacements. If your agency needs assistance with hardware specifications or upgrade assistance, please email DPSCADHelp@montcopa.org and Department of Public Safety – Technology Division staff will be happy to assist where possible.
Flu Shots Available for First Responders

On Thursday, December 3rd, the Department of Public Safety will offer free flu vaccinations for Montgomery County first responders from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the Second Alarmers Rescue Squad main station, located at 307 Davisville Road, Willow Grove, PA 19090.

This is the Department of Public Safety’s fourth and final offering of free first responder flu shots. The Department previously hosted events at the Limerick Fire Department (November 9th), Public Safety Training Campus (November 18th), and Volunteer Medical Service Corps of Lansdale (November 24th).

Preregistration is required. To register, complete this form (https://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/29450/Flu-Registration--Screening-Form-2020) and email a copy to EMStraining@montcopa.org. The form is also available in the November 2020 Notices. The deadline for registration is December 3rd at 9:00 AM. If you have any questions or need assistance in registering, email EMStraining@montcopa.org.

New EVOC Vehicle Placed in Service

The Montgomery County Department of Public Safety and Police Chiefs’ Association of Montgomery County have been conducting an Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC) since 1980, and recently received a new asset through the generosity of Upper Merion Township. The program provides police officers, firefighters, EMS personnel, other first responders extensive classroom instruction and practical training in the operation of emergency response vehicles under emergency conditions. The program also educates municipal employees in defensive driving techniques.

Over the past four decades, over 6,000 first responders and 1,000 municipal employees have received EVOC training in Montgomery County. The program has received two Pennsylvania Governor Highway Safety awards since its inception.

EVOC instructors are all certified and are members of the various police departments in Montgomery County. The vehicles used in the program are owned by Montgomery County, maintained by the Montgomery County Law Enforcement Training Fund, and were previously donated by Montgomery County municipal police departments and other agencies.

The truck pictured above now serves as an EVOC equipment and maintenance vehicle after being retired as a fire police and Haz-Mat unit for the King of Prussia Volunteer Fire Company in Upper Merion Township. The truck was donated to the EVOC program through the efforts of the Upper Merion Township Director of Public Safety and Chief of Police Thomas Nolan, Upper Merion Township Chief of Fire & EMS Dennis Rubin, and King of Prussia Fire Company Chief James Gallagher.
Firefighters Graduate from Entry Level Training

The Montgomery County Fire Academy held its first-ever virtual graduation ceremony on Tuesday, November 10th for the 19 firefighters of Class 2001, celebrating their successful completion of the Pennsylvania Entry Level Fire Fighter program.

Firefighter Brett Fineman of the Barren Hill Fire Company (left) received the award for the highest grade in the Interior Firefighter course. Brett also had the highest grade in the Firefighter I written certification examination. All members of the class passed both the course final exam and the certification exam on the first attempt.

The students of Class 2001 had their training interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in March but returned to class utilizing strict mitigation measures in July. The graduation was held virtually due to gathering size restrictions and for the safety of instructors, students, and guests.

The Commencement Speaker was Mike Weider, Executive Director of the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA), a Pennsburg native and life member of the Pennsburg Fire Company.

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

Firefighter Pablo Aguilar, Glenside Fire Co.
Firefighter David Azzoli, Good Will Fire Co.
Firefighter Jonathan Cresson, Swarthmore Fire Assn.
Firefighter Gregory DeNicola, Radnor Fire Co.
Firefighter Brandon Fink, Phoenixville Fire Dept.
Firefighter David Hasbrouck, Oakmont Fire Co.
Firefighter Erik Iverson, Merion Fire Co. of Ardmore
Firefighter Oleg Koemets, Fort Washington Fire Co.
Firefighter Samuel LaGrossa, Norriton Fire Engine Co.

Firefighter John Lindsay Jr., Briarcliffe Fire Co.
Firefighter Stephanie MacInnes, Worcester Vol. Fire Co.
Firefighter Joseph Schaefer-Ferrara IV, South Media Fire Co.
Firefighter Alexis Sers, Good Will Fire Co.
Firefighter Brandon Shimer, North End Fire Co.
Firefighter Yaman Tobaje, Newtown Square Fire Co.
Firefighter Ryan Vargo, North End Fire Co.

Editor’s Note: Fire Academy staff allowed the members of Class 2001 to lower their cloth masks for five seconds for their socially distant class photo.
Cradlepoint Modem Deployment Continues

The Department of Public Safety will soon be receiving another batch of modems and antennas for emergency responder vehicles acquired through the Homeland Security Grant Program. Department staff have so far deployed a total of 330 modems to 32 police departments, approximately 200 of which are already installed and in use. This next batch of modems will allow the Department to outfit the remainder of police units throughout Montgomery County.

Several of the remaining police departments have already completed the process to submit information to the Department of Public Safety and they will be deployed first from this new batch. If your police department has not yet submitted the below information, please do so as soon as possible.

In order to receive the new modems, please email the following information to DPSCADHelp@montcopa.org:

- Agency Name
- Agency Contact(s) who are authorized to sign for and pick up equipment for the agency
- Vehicle list with car numbers of vehicles currently equipped with Sierra Wireless modems

All responder agencies are required to switch to these new modems as the Sierra Wireless modems are end-of-life and are no longer being repaired by the manufacturer.

The modems and antennas are being provided free of charge in a 1-for-1 swap for the old Sierra Wireless modems. Agencies are responsible for installation charges and carrier data plans. These new modems and antennas provide better speed and coverage as they capable of accessing all 4G frequencies, many of which had not been deployed by the cell carriers during initial Sierra Wireless deployment.

These new devices, along with upgrades made to our servers, now allow us to be carrier agnostic, meaning if another wireless carrier has better coverage in your response area, you are now able to utilize them. Agencies MUST advise the Department of Public Safety before any carrier changes are made and you MUST have a Cradlepoint installed before doing so. The Sierra Wireless modems are tied to Verizon and cannot be switched.

Department of Public Safety Personnel Changes

We would like to wish our full-time Community Outreach Coordinator and part-time weatherman Tim Elbertson the very best of luck in his new role as the 9-1-1 Public Education and Outreach Specialist for the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency!

Before joining our DPS team back in 2011, Tim was a meteorologist and news anchor at TV stations in Kansas, Texas, Minnesota, and Colorado. It comes as no surprise that he is a two-time Emmy Award winner!

Tim is pictured here manning the control board for our ReadyRadio FM station, a program he was instrumental in bringing to Montgomery County, for one last time on November 13th. Thanks for everything, Tim!
Class 2002 Firefighters Complete Basic Training

The Montgomery County Fire Academy is proud to announce that a second class has completed training for the Pennsylvania Entry Level Firefighter program in 2020. The 39 members of Class 2002, like their predecessors in Class 2001, had their training interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown in March.

They resumed training in July and completed the Interior Firefighter class with live-fire evolutions in fire suppression, thermal dynamics, hose-line advancement and search-and-rescue on November 14th.

All 39 members of class 2002 subsequently passed their written examination and underwent skills testing for Firefighter I certification from November 17th though the 22nd. Congratulations to Class 2002!

Editor’s Note: Fire Academy staff allowed the members of Class 2002 to lower their cloth masks for five seconds for their socially distant class photo.

Emergency Management Certifications Awarded

Over the past month, the following Montgomery County emergency services professionals received certifications from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA):

**Professional Level**  
Nicholas W. Weaver, Whitemarsh Twp.

**Advanced Level**  
Edward J. Martin Jr., MCDPS

**Basic Level**  
Jason T. Adams, Upper Providence Twp.
Caitlin Asbert, Royersford Borough
Jason Connelly, Lower Providence Twp.
Joshua R. Kratz, Skippack Twp.
Conor Michael McCann, Whitpain Twp.
Christopher R. Schwartz, Plymouth Twp.
Sarah Soto, Upper Providence Twp.
Andrew G. Thomas, Plymouth Twp.

Congratulations to all recipients! For more information on how to obtain PEMA certifications in Montgomery County, contact Training and Preparedness Coordinator Heather Stem at hstem@montcopa.org.
On Monday, November 2\textsuperscript{nd}, the Department of Public Safety assisted the Norristown Fire Department with a 3-alarm fire involving multiple properties on the 700 block of Kohn Street. Approximately 11 residents were displaced and were assisted by the American Red Cross of Southeastern Pennsylvania. Two firefighters sustained injuries and were transported to the hospital.

On Tuesday, November 3\textsuperscript{rd}, Montgomery County Hazardous Materials Response Team apparatus and members stood by at the Emergency Operations Center all day to provide immediate support for any incidents at polling places. The mission of these Rapid Response Teams was to render a scene safe and resume voting operations as quickly as possible.

On Saturday, November 14\textsuperscript{th}, the 39 members of Montgomery County Fire Academy Class 2002 successfully completed live evolutions involving fire suppression, thermal dynamics, hose-line advancement and search-and-rescue at the Public Safety Training Campus.
ReadyRadio Spots Available for First Responder Agencies

The Department of Public Safety’s ReadyRadio FM radio station now has spots available for Montgomery County police, fire, EMS, and emergency management agencies that would like to advertise for recruitment or special events or run other public safety or public service content.

ReadyRadio is one of the only countywide FM radio networks in the United States that airs public safety/emergency management information (not scanner traffic) on a 24-hour basis. The main studio is located at the Emergency Operations Center in Eagleville, and airs over four FM frequencies broadcasting from five tower sites:

- **WRDY** – 106.5 FM (Eagleville)
- **WEMA** – 105.7 FM (Marlborough)
- **WEMZ** – 105.7 FM (Plymouth)
- **WEMK** – 92.9 FM (Upper Gwynedd/Lansdale)
- **WEMQ** – 92.1 FM (Horsham/Fort Washington)

The broadcast signal reaches an estimated 80 percent of Montgomery County residents in their homes and vehicles. ReadyRadio is also streamed online at [https://radio.securenetsystems.net/cirruscontent/MCDPS](https://radio.securenetsystems.net/cirruscontent/MCDPS).

During incidents or disasters, trained Department of Public Safety staff have the ability to broadcast “live” from the Emergency Operations Center with critical information. We will also share news and updates from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, our neighboring cities and counties, and all 62 municipalities within Montgomery County.

If your agency is interested in airing content, contact Roy Land (rland@montcopa.org). For more information about ReadyRadio, visit [www.montcopa.org/3281/Ready-Radio](http://www.montcopa.org/3281/Ready-Radio).

Upcoming EMS Training

Registration is now open for two upcoming courses offered by the EMS Training Institute:

- **Instructor Methodology Course**
  - Dates: January 7*, 9†, 10†, 11*, & 14*, 2021
  - Times: Weekdays* 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM, Weekends† 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
  - Location: Public Safety Training Campus
  - Cost: $135
  - Registration Deadline: January 4, 2021

- **Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)**
  - Dates/Times: This is a hybrid class. Assignments will be posted weekly beginning January 18, 2021. In-person practical sessions will be held at the PSTC beginning in May 2021.
  - Location: Remote/Public Safety Training Campus
  - Cost: $150 nonrefundable registration fee + $600 course fee
  - Registration Deadline: January 4, 2021

Register online at [https://www.emstrainingcenter.org/](https://www.emstrainingcenter.org/). For additional information, see the November 2020 Notices or contact the EMS Training Institute at (610) 278-2666.
Manpower Tracking for Fire Apparatus Now Available

Effective Thursday, October 8th, the Montgomery County Emergency Communications Center now has the ability to formally track fire apparatus staffing in the CAD system.

Any time that an apparatus goes enroute and announces staffing (e.g., “County, Engine 1 responding with 4”), fire dispatchers will be able to record this and report back to the Incident Commander or Officer in Charge when requested.

As a refresher, fire officers are asked to review the Montgomery County Response Staffing Number Standard, a recommended practice established jointly by the Montgomery County Fire Chiefs’ Association and the Montgomery County Municipal Fire Officers’ Association.

The standard is attached in the November 2020 Notices and is also available at http://mcfirechiefs.org/standards/.

Emergency Communications Continues to Provide AFRI Alerts

In order to protect first responders in Montgomery County, Emergency Communications Center staff continue to provide timely notifications to the field whenever there is a known elevated risk of COVID-19 exposure on an incident.

When a 9-1-1 or 10-digit caller indicates that he or she, or another individual on location exhibits symptoms of, or has been tested for, COVID-19, the calltaker will enter “AFRI” in the notes and the dispatcher will voice it to responding units via radio.

The acronym AFRI, which stands for Acute Febrile Respiratory Illness, is utilized when the caller answered “yes” to one or both of the following questions:

- Is the patient or those in close contact with the patient such as household members exhibiting any flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath?
- Has the patient or anyone in the household been tested for COVID-19?

In addition, Department of Public Safety staff receive a copy of the daily report of positive test results and enter remarks in CAD for the residences of those on the list. The CAD remark “+CONFIRMED AFRI LOCATION” indicates that a resident at the location or household has tested positive for COVID-19, while “+CONFIRMED AFRI COMPLEX” means that an individual within that complex (e.g., apartment building, Long Term Care facility, etc.) has tested positive.

Dispatchers will then voice via radio when one of these remarks is displayed in CAD. The confirmed positive test result AFRI remarks remain in CAD for 30 days after the initial entry, unless contact tracing investigations provide a reason to remove the remarks (e.g., college student living on campus outside of Montgomery County used parents’ address when registering for testing).

Responders should be cautioned that the lack of an AFRI note or remark on a call does not guarantee a COVID-free environment and does not indicate that responders should interact with anyone on location without proper PPE. Instead, a standard level of precaution should be exercised at all calls for service during the COVID-19 pandemic, with elevated procedures enacted when an AFRI notification is made by the dispatcher.
Career Opportunities

The Department of Public Safety is currently accepting applications for two positions within the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division and four positions related to the COVID-19 logistics program. Click on the hyperlinks for full job descriptions and to apply online.

EMS Division

- **Health and Safety Specialist**
  - Provides real-time first responder exposure tracking, risk analysis, and health monitoring using the CDC/NIOSH Emergency Responder Health Monitoring System or other similar system.
  - Monitors calls with high exposure potential and performs immediate exposure tracking and responder risk potential assessment.
  - Provides rapid decontamination/disinfection after high acuity incidents and minimizes crew exposure through rapid response actions.
  - Responds as a Health and Safety Liaison to the Incident Commander during large scale or complex public safety incidents to provide contamination consultation.

- **Training Coordinator - EMS**
  - Supervises and coordinates all activities associated with operations of all EMS training programs and the EMS Training Institute.
  - Assesses the Division’s training needs and the development of a schedule to address those needs. Classes include but are not limited to EMT, Paramedic, continuing education classes, and other specialty courses.
  - Manages the continuing education and certification programs for the Pennsylvania Department of Health - Bureau of EMS.

COVID-19 Logistics Program

- **COVID-19 Logistics Program Manager**
  - Serves as the lead planner for countywide logistics and resource management plans and manages logistics staff.
  - Collaborates with county and non-governmental agencies to develop and maintain a suite of plans and procedures including but not limited to: logistics and EOC interface, resource requests and mutual aid, emergency procurement, resource staging, field logistics support, and receiving and distribution operations.
  - Works closely with other staff members to ensure that resource management and logistics procedures are accurately identified in all emergency plans.
  - Ensures that inventory and maintenance best practices are employed for all assets within their purview to include regular systems checks and audits.

- **COVID-19 Logistics Program Specialist** (3 openings available)
  - Assists with planning for countywide logistics and resource management plans, and with delivery and setup of emergency assets and materials.
  - Works closely with other staff members to ensure that resource management and logistics procedures are accurately identified in all emergency plans.
  - Ensures that inventory and maintenance best practices are employed for all assets within their purview to include regular systems checks and audits.
Motorola Portable Radio Battery Reminder

Motorola has notified the Department of Public Safety of an update that pertains to any agency that is purchasing UL (White Dot) batteries. These batteries, often referred to as “intrinsically safe,” are replacing the FM (Green Dot) batteries. The new UL 3100mAh battery for the APX 6000 portable is slightly thicker, does not fit in the hard-plastic holsters, and may not fit in the leather holsters.

In addition, APX 6000 radios may require a firmware update when new IMPRES 2 batteries are purchased if the radio displays LOW BATTERY after being charged. With any questions, contact Motorola Sales Representative Paul Murray at (973) 222-9422 or paul.murray@motorolasolutions.com.

For more information, see the November 2020 Notices.

COVID-19 Pandemic: Key Information for First Responders

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Department of Public Safety continues to fulfill critical need resource requests for first responder agencies during the COVID-19 crisis. As normal supply chains continue to come back online, please utilize your local procurement procedures prior to submitting resource requests. If you do have a critical PPE need, please submit all resource requests to EOCwatchdesk@montcopa.org.

Exposure Reporting Process

If you are a first responder (law enforcement, fire, EMS, or emergency management) and believe you were exposed to COVID-19 in the course of your duties, follow these steps:

1) Immediately notify your supervisor or agency infection control officer.

2) Avoid contact with others, maintain social distance (at least 6 feet), and self-monitor for symptoms (check temperature twice a day and watch for fever, cough, or shortness of breath). You will receive formal instructions to quarantine, if necessary, from the Montgomery County Office of Public Health.

3) Complete the First Responder Self-Report Form: http://episurvey.mcad911.com/EpiInfoWebSurvey/Home/a85581e8-ef39-478d-ad2c-76bbf1a44b50. This form is used to formally document the impact of COVID-19 on the community as well as document the source of a potential exposure.

4) Register to be tested. You can receive a test at any one of the 6 county-run test sites (https://data-montcopa.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/covid-testing-page), through your Primary Care Physician, or at a commercial lab.

First responders with exposure-related questions may contact EMS Field Specialist Ed Martin, Jr. (emartin@montcopa.org) or Chief Medical Officer and Regional EMS Medical Director Dr. Alvin Wang (awang@montcopa.org). With immediate concerns, call (610) 631-6500.