Hurricane Ida Brings Record Breaking Floods, Tornado to Montgomery County

On the afternoon of Wednesday, September 1st, bands of heavy rain from the remnants of Hurricane Ida started to move into Montgomery County. Over the next several hours, 6 to 8 inches of rain or more fell, leading to widespread urban/flash flooding and stranding countless people in their vehicles and homes. To make matters worse, an EF-2 tornado with 130 MPH winds carved an 8-mile-long path of destruction through Upper Dublin and Horsham Townships during the early evening hours.

By Thursday morning, September 2nd, both the Schuylkill River at Norristown and the Perkiomen Creek at Graterford crested at all-time record levels. The Schuylkill’s waters exceeded a record that was set nearly 50 years ago during Hurricane Agnes (1972), and far surpassed other recent crests seen during Floyd (1999), Isaias (2020), and Irene (2011). The Perkiomen, not to be outdone, bested the previous record set during Isaias by nearly 5 feet. Communities along both waterways experienced catastrophic flooding for numerous hours, even after the rain stopped falling.

The Department of Public Safety dispatched 467 water rescues during the storm and immediate aftermath, many of which involved the rescue of multiple individuals. These rescues were heroically executed by our dedicated municipal first responders and members of the Montgomery County Urban Search & Rescue Team, saving countless lives. Between noon on Wednesday and the end of the day on Thursday, the County’s Emergency Communications Center (ECC) received 9,034 incoming calls, nearly three times as many as the average 36-hour period. During the busiest hour alone, 6:00-7:00 PM on Wednesday evening, the ECC received a whopping 1,067 calls, which constitutes almost half the typical daily average of calls in a single hour.

By the time the waters receded and skies cleared on Friday, Ida had claimed the lives of four Montgomery County residents and either destroyed or caused major damage to more than 300 homes. That morning, and throughout the next week, Department of Public Safety staff deployed to numerous areas across the County to assess Ida’s...
devastation with our municipal partners and document the damage. On Friday, September 10th, President Biden signed a Major Disaster Declaration, which made federal disaster assistance available to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance programs may include but are not limited to rental assistance, repair or replacement of housing, and funds for other needs (e.g., vehicles, clothing, appliances, etc.). Residents can apply for disaster assistance from FEMA using one of the below methods:

- Online at www.disasterassistance.gov
- Over the phone at 1-800-621-3362 / TTY 1-800-462-7585
- Via the FEMA smartphone application: Google Play or Apple App Store
- In-person at the Montgomery County Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) – location, hours, and other details are available at www.montcopa.org/Ida

In addition to the FEMA programs described above, low-interest disaster loans are available from the U.S. Small Business Administration for certain homeowners, renters, and business owners in Montgomery County. These loans may cover losses not covered by insurance or FEMA, as well as business operating expenses that could have been met had the disaster not occurred. Apply for SBA assistance using one of the below methods:

- Online at https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/ela
- Via mail, call 1-800-659-2955 to request a paper application or download a copy at https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/ela. Completed applications should be mailed to U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155.
- In-person at the Montgomery County Disaster Recovery Center (DRC)

For the latest information on Hurricane Ida recovery in Montgomery County, visit www.montcopa.org/Ida.

### Hazardous Materials Response Team Recertified

On Saturday, September 18th, the Montgomery County Hazardous Materials Response Team successfully completed the PEMA-evaluated recertification exercise, which is required along with on-site equipment and procedure assessments every four years to maintain status as a state-certified HazMat team.

The scenario for this year’s exercise was a leaking 150 pound cylinder of poisonous chlorine gas. In addition to capping the cylinder to contain the leak, hazardous materials technicians performed scene size-up, reconnaissance, documentation, research, air monitoring, medical monitoring (pre- and post-entry), PPE and equipment selection, and decontamination.

After the exercise, team members completed a hot wash to review strengths and weaknesses identified by both exercise evaluators and participants. The information gathered during this hot wash will be used to guide future planning, training, and operations.
New Pediatric Hospital Opening in Upper Merion Township

The Department of Public Safety has been asked to notify Montgomery County EMS providers and other first responders involved in medical care and transport that the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) will be opening a new in-patient pediatric hospital in Upper Merion Township, effective **Monday, November 1, 2021**.

CHOP's King of Prussia Hospital will feature an Emergency Department (first dedicated pediatric ED in Montgomery County), Med/Surge, and ICU capabilities. It will be located at 550 S. Goddard Boulevard, King of Prussia, PA 19406, on the existing CHOP campus containing the Specialty Care & Surgery Center and Urgent Care facility.

EMS providers with questions should contact Matthew Butler, CHOP's Director of Emergency Preparedness, at butlerm1@email.chop.edu.

Equipment Distributed to Montgomery County EMS Agencies

The Department of Public Safety’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division, in partnership with the Montgomery County Ambulance Association, recently distributed nitrile gloves to EMS agencies throughout Montgomery County. The gloves were purchased through the Pennsylvania Department of Health - Bureau of EMS Emergency Medical Service Operating Fund (EMSOF).

Law Enforcement Conference Postponed to Spring 2022

The Department of Public Safety’s upcoming law enforcement conference has been postponed due to rising COVID-19 numbers in the region. The conference, previously scheduled for October 28, 2021, will now be held on **Thursday, April 7, 2022**, from 8:00 AM until 4:00 PM, at Normandy Farm Hotel & Conference Center (1401 Morris Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422).

The conference is for law enforcement professionals in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties. Utilizing funding from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force and in coordination with the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Philadelphia Field Office, the agenda will feature multiple presentations on topics such as foreign and domestic terrorism, social media exploitation, the surge of violent crime and civil unrest, protecting critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, drug overdose surveillance, and intelligence sharing.

To register, visit [https://bit.ly/2Xk8sSb](https://bit.ly/2Xk8sSb) or scan the QR code to the right. The registration link remains the same and any individuals who registered for the original October 2021 date will be notified directly of the change. To view a copy of the conference flyer, see the September Notices.

Please note that this conference is for law enforcement ONLY and all registrants will be vetted before registration is confirmed.
Montgomery County Rededicates September 11th Memorial

On Saturday, September 11, 2021, the twentieth anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks, the Department of Public Safety hosted a rededication ceremony for Montgomery County’s September 11th memorial.

The memorial, an 18-foot-tall sculpture of bronze and steel featuring hands cradling an I-beam from the North Tower of the World Trade Center, was originally installed outside of the Montgomery County Courthouse in 2005, on the fourth anniversary of the terrorist attacks. To honor the County’s first responders, the memorial was permanently relocated to the Emergency Operations Center last month.

The Department of Public Safety would like to thank all of the first responders, elected officials, and members of the community who joined us for a morning of reflection and remembrance earlier this month. We will never forget.

Emergency Management Certifications Awarded

Over the past few months, several of our municipal partners were presented with their Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) 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 Professional Level**

Robert Carovillano, MCDPS
Michael Rohlfing, Lower Providence Township
Shannon Schreur, Upper Merion Township
Z. Raymond Sokolowski, Conshohocken Boro.

**PEMA Basic Level**

John A. Iatarola, Pennsburg Borough
Jacob Robert Millevoi, Montgomery Twp.
Anthony Rubas, Montgomery Township
Jacob Weltman, Montgomery Township

**PEMA Advanced Level**

Daniel M. Schaefer, Cheltenham Township
Stanley M. Turtle, Perkiomen Township
Ida Brings Timely Reminder of the Importance of Water Rescue Training

On Wednesday, September 1st and Thursday, September 2nd, as Hurricane Ida’s remnants moved through Montgomery County, the Department of Public Safety’s Emergency Communications Center dispatched 467 water rescue incidents, many of which involved the rescue of multiple subjects.

Torrential rain on Wednesday afternoon and evening brought widespread urban flash flooding throughout Montgomery County and caused numerous small streams and creeks to overtop their banks. Hours later, the Schuylkill River (above) and Perkiomen Creek rose to record-setting levels, leading to catastrophic flooding in communities situated along both waterways.

As these experiences demonstrate, there is an ongoing need for emergency responders to train and prepare for flooding and other water related emergencies. A class of 14 students recently completed the Montgomery County Fire Academy’s Water Rescue and Emergency Response training course with a practical exercise on the Schuylkill River (pictured left and below).

This class provides basic self-rescue techniques to keep responders safe as well as training to perform shore-based rescues.

The Montgomery County Fire Academy offers the entire catalog of Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission courses including Water Rescue for the First Responder, Water Rescue and Emergency Response, Advanced Line Systems Rescue, Emergency Boat Operations and Rescue, Basic Ice Safety, and Ice Rescue and Emergency Response. Water Rescue for the First Responder is also available in an online format, and will be offered next on Tuesday, November 30th at 7:00 pm.

To view the Fire Academy’s full training schedule and register for any upcoming classes, visit https://www.montcopa.org/1006/Training-Schedule. Additional water rescue-related courses will be offered in future semesters.
Motorola Notifies DPS of Change in Intrinsic Safety Standards

Motorola recently notified the Department of Public Safety that a change has occurred regarding radio communications intrinsic safety standards that may affect Montgomery County field user radio repairs and battery replacement purchases. In 2012, the industry-wide FM3610_88 intrinsic safety standard expired. Motorola began phasing out the manufacturing of radios meeting these specifications, which ended in December 2015. After that date, all radios were manufactured under the new TIA-4950 standard.

Motorola has communicated that they will continue to repair radios produced under FM3610_88 specifications, but they will remove any intrinsic safety stickers and markings from the radio before returning it to the customer. In addition, Motorola will no longer sell FM3610_88 certified batteries, as they do not meet the radio industry’s most recent intrinsic safety standards. Any replacement batteries purchased for these radios will not be intrinsically safe.

Motorola will offer a discount to agencies interested in replacing equipment manufactured under the legacy FM3610_88 standard. All questions and inquiries should be directed to Montgomery County Motorola Sales Representative Paul Murray at paul.murray@motorolasolutions.com. For additional details, please see the Motorola bulletins in the September 2021 Notices.

Construction Begins on EOC Garage and Warehouse

After numerous months of planning and design, construction has officially started on the Department of Public Safety’s new garage and warehouse complex. The steel was delivered on September 16th and already the buildings are beginning to come together. The expected finish date on these new facilities is late spring or summer 2022.

State Grants for Fire Companies and EMS Agencies Available

The application period for the Pennsylvania Fire Company and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Grant Program is now open. Applications will be accepted until Monday, October 25, 2021 at 4:00 PM. Fire companies and EMS agencies, as well as volunteer rescue squads, are eligible to apply for funding. Eligible organizations may apply for a combination of up to two projects in the following categories:

- Construction, renovation, or repair of facilities.
- Purchase or repair of equipment and purchase of fuel.
- Debt reduction associated with a facility or equipment.
- Training and certification of members.
- Fire prevention materials for the public.
- Overtime costs associated with backfilling during training (career depts. only).
- Recruitment and retention.
- Revenue loss caused by lack of opportunities for fundraising due COVID-19.
- Construction of a new facility (fire companies only).

For complete eligibility criteria and application instructions, visit https://bit.ly/FCEMSGP21-22. Questions may be directed to ra-vfcvasgp@pa.gov.
Third, Booster Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine and Flu Shots Available for Eligible FirstResponders

The Department of Public Safety strives to administer COVID-19 vaccines in accordance with all program requirements and conditions of the CDC, ACIP, and FDA. CDC recommends those with moderate to severe immune compromise due to a medical condition or receipt of immunosuppressive medications or treatments receive a 3rd dose of COVID-19 mRNA vaccine after completing their 2-dose mRNA vaccine series.

A list of moderate to severe immune compromise conditions can be found here.

Other conditions, treatments, or medications may result in an individual being characterized as moderately or severely immunocompromised. If you are uncertain about whether you meet one of the qualifications listed above, please consult with your primary care physician.

In addition, those who have received two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech’s COVID-19 vaccination should receive a booster of vaccine at least six months after the 2nd dose if you are:

- Age 65 and older;
- 18 years and older but living in a long-term care setting; or
- Age 50-64 with underlying medical conditions.

Lastly, CDC recommends that individuals who meet the following conditions may receive a booster dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at least six months after their 2nd dose based on individual benefits and risks:

- Age 18-49 years with underlying medical conditions; or
- Age 18-64 years and at increased risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting (includes first responders).

The Department of Public Safety is pleased to offer private first-responder clinics providing 3rd doses of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and booster doses of Pfizer, as well as seasonal influenza (flu) vaccines.

First responders (EMS personnel, law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency management officials) who meet any of the above criteria are welcome to schedule themselves at a Department of Public Safety clinic. Online registration for is now available at https://www.montcopa.org/3874/Immunocompromised-First-Responder-COVID-19.

Individuals should bring their existing vaccination card and are required to sign a self-attestation form to confirm their eligibility for a third or booster dose. Third doses must match the vaccine individuals received for their first and second dose (i.e., if your first two doses were Moderna vaccine, your third dose must be Moderna vaccine as well). Booster doses are authorized for the Pfizer vaccine ONLY. Booster or additional doses are not currently recommended for those who have received the Janssen (J&J) vaccine.

All clinics will be hosted at the Public Safety Training Campus (1175 Conshohocken Road, Conshohocken, PA 19428) in a drive-through fashion in the back of the building.

First responders in need of a first or second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine may register at https://www.montcopa.org/3875/First-Responder-COVID-19-Vaccine-1st-Dose, or through the Montgomery County Office of Public Health at www.montcopa.org/COVID-19vaccine. All vaccine brand options will be offered based on availability.
Cradlepoint Modem Deployment Continues for Fire Agencies

The Department of Public Safety is ready to move to the next phase of deploying modems and antennas, acquired through the Homeland Security Grant Program, for emergency responder vehicles. Department staff have so far deployed a total of about 550 modems to 85 first responder agencies. While we continue to progress through EMS, we are also now beginning to deploy new modems to fire companies and departments throughout Montgomery County. In order to receive the new modems, agencies should 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 identification 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 implementation.

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.

Radio Reprogramming Project Nears 90% Mark

The Department of Public Safety has now reprogrammed approximately 90% of mobile and portable radios in the field, which includes the removal of old radio system channels. Department staff will be reaching out to the remaining agencies to schedule this programming in the near future.

There is no need to reach out to MCDPS regarding this initiative. Once we are ready for your agency, we will contact you. As a reminder, on the day of your re-programming appointment, please ensure:

- The portable and mobile radios are easily accessible
- All accessories (speaker mics, cases, etc.) are removed from the radios
- The side programming/accessory port cover is removed from all portable radios
- All portable radios batteries are charged

Each portable radio will take approximately five (5) minutes to fully program and each mobile will take approximately 20 minutes. During programming, any favorites stored in the ‘Favorites’ bank of each radio will be cleared out and will need to be re-programmed by your agency personnel (an instruction sheet will be provided to assist).

Thank you in advance for your flexibility and willingness to work with the Department of Public Safety on this project.
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 pandemic. 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 EOCLogistics@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](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://www.montcopa.org/3744/COVID-19-Testing](https://www.montcopa.org/3744/COVID-19-Testing)), 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.

**COVID-19 Vaccines**

If you are a Montgomery County first responder (police, fire, or EMS), have not yet received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and are interested in receiving it, please email Public Affairs Coordinator Todd Stieritz at tstierit@montcopa.org for additional information.

Third doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are now available for immunocompromised first responders. In addition, booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine are available for:

- Individuals 65 years of age and older;
- Individuals 18-64 years of age at high risk of severe COVID-19; and
- Individuals 18-64 years of age whose frequent institutional or occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2 puts them at high risk of serious complications of COVID-19 including severe COVID-19 (includes first responders).

To register for an appointment, please visit [https://www.montcopa.org/3874/Immunocompromised-First-Responder-COVID-](https://www.montcopa.org/3874/Immunocompromised-First-Responder-COVID-).