Governor Wolf Visits Montgomery County to Promote the Department of Public Safety’s Mobile Integrated Health Team

On Wednesday, September 29th, Governor Tom Wolf visited Norristown to meet with the Department of Public Safety’s Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Team, observe their mobile vaccination operations, and promote the essential work that they’re doing in the community. On that particular day, the team was providing single-dose Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines, third and booster doses of the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines, and seasonal influenza vaccines (flu shots) in a walk-up format to individuals at the Norristown Transportation Center.

MIH operates at the intersection of public safety, public health, and conventional healthcare delivery. The team’s mission is to provide meaningful engagements with underserved and underrepresented populations by utilizing Emergency Medical Services (EMS) professionals who understand the many unique public safety challenges of working in this environment.

MIH professionals strive to deliver patient-centered care in the field while reducing health-related expenditures, improving sustainable access to critical healthcare resources such as COVID-19 vaccinations, improving the management of chronic health conditions, increasing access to medication assisted treatment and counseling for substance use disorders, and addressing the tremendous need for quality mental health care.

Over the past five months, the team has partnered with dedicated Montgomery County EMS personnel to deliver nearly 10,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to the County’s most vulnerable residents, such as those who are residing in shelters, experiencing homelessness, or are homebound.

The Department of Public Safety would like to thank SEPTA, the Montgomery County Immunization Coalition, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Office of Public Health, and Access Services, Inc. for their continued partnership in this critical effort.
Hurricane Ida Financial Assistance Now Available for Municipalities and Emergency Services Agencies

On Friday, October 8th, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced that Hurricane Ida Public Assistance (PA) funding has been made available to municipal governments and certain private nonprofit organizations, including those providing emergency medical services, fire protection, and/or rescue, in Montgomery County. Local governments and agencies in Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Fulton, Huntingdon, Luzerne, Philadelphia, Schuylkill, and York counties are also eligible.

The following categories of PA are now available on a 75 percent cost-sharing basis for eligible expenditures: debris removal (Category A); emergency protective measures (Cat. B); roads and bridges (Cat. C); water control facilities (Cat. D); buildings and equipment (Cat. E); utilities (Cat. F); and parks, recreational facilities, and other items (Cat. G).

Emergency services agencies that are structured as a municipal department, office, or other sub-unit must submit documentation of expenditures and damage through their municipality. Agencies structured as a nonprofit organization must apply to FEMA independently.

FEMA and PEMA held virtual Public Assistance applicant briefings during the week of October 18th. Any potentially eligible entity that did not attend a briefing or did attend but has questions may contact PEMA Specialist Jonathan Skripka at jskripka@pa.gov. The Request for Public Assistance MUST be submitted to FEMA through the FEMA portal by Monday, November 8, 2021, so interested parties are encouraged to start the process as soon as possible.

For more information, visit https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public/program-overview.

DPS Ready to Proceed with Berks County Interoperability Project

The Department of Public Safety is now ready to proceed with reprogramming of field user radios as part of the interoperability initiative with Berks County. The Berks County Department of Emergency Services requires several upgrades for a portable or mobile radio to operate on their public safety communications system. Most Montgomery County radios do not possess these required attributes, such as GPS functionality, as they would have made the initial purchase more expensive, and they are not required in order to operate on Montgomery County’s radio system.

There will be a financial cost that agencies will be responsible for covering if they wish for their radio(s) to be programmed with Berks County channels. The cost to upgrade each radio will vary based on radio specifications but will typically be several hundred dollars per radio. These upgrades are required by Berks County for a radio to be permitted to operate on their system; Montgomery County does not require these upgrades. All upgrade costs will be invoiced by and paid to Motorola.

To initiate the process, agencies must first obtain a quote from Motorola, which will vary based on the number, type (mobile vs. portable), and model (e.g., 4000, 4500, 6000, 6500) of radios that the agency is interested in purchasing upgrades for. To receive a quote, agencies should email EOCTech@montcopa.org.

Individuals and agencies with questions regarding Berks County’s radio requirements should contact the Berks County Department of Emergency Services at (610) 374-4800 or BerksDES@countyofberks.com.
COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters Now Available for First Responders

The Department of Public Safety is pleased to offer private first-responder clinics providing booster doses of the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines, following FDA and CDC approval, for people who meet the eligibility criteria below. Per the CDC, individuals who are eligible for the booster may choose which vaccine they receive as a booster dose. Some may have a preference for the same vaccine type that they originally received, and others may prefer to get a different booster. Updated CDC recommendations now allow for “mix-and-matching.” Individuals who have specific questions about the best vaccine for them are encouraged to contact their primary care physician for guidance.

In addition, the Department continues to offer first and second doses for first responders who have not yet been fully vaccinated, as well as third doses for immunocompromised personnel. Seasonal influenza vaccines (“flu shots”) are also available while supplies last. Individuals may receive their flu shot at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine (any dose), but separate appointments must be made for each.

Booster Eligibility Criteria for Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Recipients

For individuals who originally received the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, the following groups are now eligible for a booster shot, as long as it has been at least six months since their initial vaccination series:

- 65 years and older
- Age 18+ who live in long-term care settings
- Age 18+ who have underlying medical conditions
- Age 18+ who work or live in high-risk settings, including first responders

Individuals who originally received Pfizer or Moderna MUST meet at least one of the high-risk criteria outlined above to receive a booster shot and by registering for an appointment are confirming that they do.

Booster Eligibility Criteria for Johnson & Johnson Recipients

For those who received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, booster shots are recommended for individuals 18 and older who were vaccinated two or more calendar months ago.

Registration

To register for a vaccine appointment, please use the link(s) below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine Type</th>
<th>Registration Webpage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal influenza vaccine (&quot;flu shots&quot;)</td>
<td><a href="https://www.montcopa.org/3896/First-Responder-Flu-Shots">https://www.montcopa.org/3896/First-Responder-Flu-Shots</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All clinics, unless otherwise noted on the appropriate webpage, will be hosted at the Public Safety Training Campus (1175 Conshohocken Road, Conshohocken, PA 19428) in a drive-through fashion on the training grounds, near the structural burn tower.

The COVID-19 vaccine and flu shots are also available from the Montgomery County Office of Public Health. Details are available at [www.montcopa.org/COVID-19vaccine](http://www.montcopa.org/COVID-19vaccine).
DPS Launches First Responder Mental Health and Wellness Program

There has been no question that enduring the past 19 months of the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed many of the ways in which we view the world and has exposed many facets of our systems that were already wearing thin. As we experienced quarantine, isolation, and perhaps even illness, we were called to question our own mental health and wellness, and that of our family, friends, and colleagues.

Fortunately, many of us have heard mental health spoken of, or have spoken of it ourselves, with newfound sense of importance and urgency. However, as most of the world took a pause from their normal lives last spring and throughout the months that followed, first responders trekked on, through the fear of becoming critically ill or bringing illness home to their families. As the pandemic brings to light the acute urgency of first responders’ mental health, we must ask ourselves, how are we taking care of those who are called each day to care for others?

First responders’ mental health can be affected by the stress and trauma of the job, the behavioral health of the populations they serve, the concern of stigma surrounding the topic of mental health, poor sleep hygiene, and lack of access to quality care from clinicians who understand the first responder world. Studies show that mental health struggles such as depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are significantly more prevalent among first responders than in the general population. However, it is also known that seven in ten first responders have never accessed or utilized mental health services (Heyman et.al., 2018).

The stigma surrounding mental illness creates barriers to seeking and receiving help, particularly among those who our society expects to remain calm in the face of any danger or tragedy. We know that first responders face chronic stress and trauma in their careers. Speaking up about both mental health struggles and wellness creates the positive perception and pathways necessary to address needs and change a culture that has become quite embedded.

The Montgomery County Department of Public Safety is committed to improving the mental health and wellness of all first responders. With this goal in mind, we will strive to create and continue sustainable programming that increases access to and visibility of mental health resources that are both readily and locally available. If you have feedback or suggestions of how we may help, please contact us:

**Madison Sehn**  
Health & Safety Specialist  
(610) 945-4060  
msehn@montcopa.org

**Dr. Alvin Wang, Chief Medical Officer**  
Regional EMS Medical Director  
(610) 631-3098  
avang@montcopa.org

Please see the October Notices for a flyer entitled “Let’s Talk About: First Responder Health & Wellness.” Download a copy here. We encourage you to post this in your station and distribute to your employees or members.

For additional information and resources, visit https://www.montcopa.org/3833/First-Responder-Wellness-Resources. In case of a mental health emergency, call or text 9-1-1.

Reference

CHOP King of Prussia Hospital Opening to be Delayed

Last month, the Department of Public Safety was 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. While the originally scheduled opening date was November 1st, this date has been pushed back due to construction-related delays.

“While we remain dedicated to opening as soon as we can, the safety of our employees and patients comes first,” said Theresa A. Walls, MD, MPH, Emergency Department Director at CHOP. “We do not yet have a new opening date, but will keep you updated as we have more information. In the meantime, we're keeping the lines of communication open for our community partners, so please feel to reach out anytime. Thanks for your patience - we look forward to working with you!”

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.

Department Employees Recognized for Years of Service

Congratulations to our Department of Public Safety employees and to our colleagues in other County departments who were recognized on October 7th for reaching milestones in their careers in public service!

35 Years
Louis Chiccarine*
June Gorg

30 Years
David Brown
Dennis Orangers

25 Years
Jennifer Cass*

20 Years
Carl Flack*
Maryann Longo
Jerry Wentworth*
15 Years
Timothy Dunigan*
Marisol Reinert
Jason Wilson*
10 Years
Alexis Farley
Annamaria Mastrocola*
Anthony Rivera*
Robert Spitko*
Francis Strocen

*Unable to attend recognition ceremony

These 16 employees have provided a combined 310 years of dedicated service to the citizens and first responders of Montgomery County. Thank you for everything and congratulations on this significant achievement!
Radio Reprogramming Project Nears Completion

The Department of Public Safety is pleased to announce that it is nearing completion of mobile and portable field radio reprogramming, which includes the removal of old radio system channels. We have either programmed, or made arrangements to program, all police, fire, and EMS agency radios within Montgomery County. We are now focusing on reprogramming the radios of specialty teams and other County agencies.

There are still a number of “straggler” radios throughout the police, fire, and EMS communities that were not available and therefore not reprogrammed during the first programming initiative. Department of Public Safety staff will continue to reach out to agencies that own one or more of these radios. If you identify a radio in your inventory that still has the “old” radio system in it, please contact eoctech@montcopa.org to coordinate the reprogramming and updating of that radio.

Deadlines Approaching for Individual Federal Disaster Assistance

The deadlines for Montgomery County homeowners, renters, and business owners to apply for Hurricane Ida federal disaster assistance are quickly approaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Application Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical Damage</td>
<td>Tuesday, November 9, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Economic Injury</td>
<td>Friday, June 10, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)</td>
<td>Wednesday, November 10, 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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](http://www.disasterassistance.gov)
- Over the phone at 1-800-621-3362 / TTY 1-800-462-7585
- Via the FEMA smartphone application: [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps) or [Apple App Store](https://appstore.com)
- In-person at the Montgomery County Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) – location, hours, and other details are available at [www.montcopa.org/Ida](http://www.montcopa.org/Ida)
- In-person at a Mobile Disaster Recovery Center (MDRC) – locations and hours vary, details are available at [www.montcopa.org/Ida](http://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](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](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) or Mobile Disaster Recovery Center (MDRC)

For the latest information on Hurricane Ida recovery, visit [www.montcopa.org/Ida](http://www.montcopa.org/Ida).
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/2Xk8s5b](https://bit.ly/2Xk8s5b) 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 October Notices. Please note that this conference is for law enforcement ONLY and all registrants will be vetted before registration is confirmed.

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 575 modems to 88 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.
**Department of Public Safety Personnel Changes**

Cheyenne Beasley, Mike Cunliffe, Darlene Fogel, Kaitlyn Houseal, and Shannon Kniezewski (left to right) recently became the Department of Public Safety’s newest 9-1-1 telecommunicator trainees.

Over the next 8-12 weeks, the members of Class 102 will undergo rigorous classroom training in emergency calltaking and dispatch, before starting several more weeks of on-the-job training in the Emergency Communications Center. Congratulations and welcome to our newest employees!

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**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), 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.