9-1-1 Telecommunicator Assists Caller with Delivery of Newborn

At 6:41 AM on Wednesday, October 27th, 9-1-1 Telecommunicator Elyce Rivera was just a few minutes away from the end of a long, tiring night shift at the Department of Public Safety’s Emergency Communications Center. Over the previous 12 hours, she had answered literally dozens of calls for assistance, providing citizens in need with essential instructions and ensuring that police officers, firefighters, and medical personnel were sent to the right locations. However, little did Elyce know that the final call she’d take on her shift would be, by far, the most rewarding.

That morning, local resident Charlotte Fatoma was driving through Montgomery County when she went into labor. Realizing that she needed immediate help and knowing that she was all alone in the vehicle, Charlotte dialed 9-1-1 while traveling southbound on I-476. The call was answered by none other than newly certified 9-1-1 Calltaker, Elyce Rivera.

Charlotte was unsure of her location and was still traveling at highway speeds, so Elyce and her colleagues at the Emergency Communications Center began working as a team to figure out where she was, using multiple technologies available within the County’s Enhanced 9-1-1 system as well as their expertise on local geography. As it became clear that Charlotte would not make it to the hospital in time, Elyce instructed her to find a safe place to pull over.

Remaining calm and supportive throughout Charlotte’s incredibly stressful experience, Elyce provided clear pre-arrival instructions so that Charlotte could successfully deliver her own baby girl on the side of the Blue Route. Fortunately, Narberth Ambulance EMTs and paramedics arrived shortly afterwards, provided emergency care for Charlotte and her newborn, and transported them to the hospital. Thanks to Elyce’s assistance, both are doing well.

The next day, thanks to NBC10’s Deanna Durante, Elyce was able to connect over FaceTime with Charlotte and meet newborn Baby Elizabeth.

**Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program Accepting Applications**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Fiscal Year 2021 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program application period is now open. However, the deadline is quickly approaching. All applications must be received by **Friday, December 17th at 5:00 PM** in order to be considered for this year’s funding opportunity.

The AFG Program provides financial assistance directly to eligible fire departments, nonaffiliated emergency medical service (EMS) organizations, and State Fire Training Academies (SFTAs) for critical training and equipment. A nonaffiliated EMS organization is an agency or organization that is a public or private nonprofit emergency medical service entity providing medical transport that is not affiliated with a hospital and does not serve a geographic area in which emergency medical services are adequately provided by a fire department.

A grant made through the AFG program requires cost sharing from the receiving organization. Agencies serving a jurisdiction of 20,000 residents or fewer must agree to make available non-federal funds in an amount equal to not less than 5% of the grant awarded. For agencies serving a population between 20,000 and one million residents, the cost share is 10%. The Department of Public Safety urges eligible fire and EMS organizations to take advantage of this opportunity and apply as soon as possible. For more information, visit [https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters](https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters).

**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.
MontcoStrong Grants Awarded to 21 Fire and EMS Agencies

On October 14th, the Montgomery County Commerce Department and Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County announced the 225 grant awards for the MontcoStrong 2021 Non-Profit Resiliency Grant Program. Congratulations to the following fire and EMS agencies who will receive funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Fire/EMS</th>
<th>Grant Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bryn Athyn Fire Company</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegeville Fire Company No. 1</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Ambulance Association of Ambler</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbertsville Area Community Ambulance Service</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbertsville Fire and Rescue Company</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Will Steam Fire Engine Company #1</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harleysville Area Emergency Medical Service Inc.</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsham Fire Company #1</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Providence Community Center</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Penn Volunteer Fire Company</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsburg Fire Company #1</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth Community Ambulance Association</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Alarmers Association and Rescue Squad of Montgomery County</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skippack Emergency Medical Services, Inc.</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souderton Community Ambulance Association Inc.</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trappe Fire Company No. 1</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Frederick Fire Company</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Perkiomen Valley Ambulance Association</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Medical Service Corps of Lansdale</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Medical Service Corps of Lower Merion &amp; Narberth (Narberth Ambulance)</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$38,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitemarsh Community Ambulance Association</td>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$933,900</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nine fire and 12 EMS agencies listed above represent 9.3% of total awardees (225) and 12.4% of total funds disbursed ($7,511,270). A full list of awardees can be found here. To learn more about the program, visit https://www.montcopa.org/3822/MSNP2021.

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.
Private Vaccine Clinics Remain Available for First Responders

The Department of Public Safety continues to offer COVID-19 vaccine booster shots and third doses at private, first-responder-only clinics at the Public Safety Training Campus. Boosters and third doses are safe and offer the most effective protection against COVID-19 infections, including the Delta variant.

Booster doses are now available for anyone aged 18 or older. Third doses are available for people with moderately to severely compromised immune systems. In addition, the Department continues to offer first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for first responders who are not yet fully vaccinated.

### If you originally received...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna</th>
<th>Johnson &amp; Johnson/Janssen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Who should get a booster?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Everyone 18 years or older</th>
<th>Everyone 18 years or older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### When should you get a booster?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At least 6 months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series.</th>
<th>At least 2 months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Which booster should you get?

|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|


While supplies last, the Department of Public Safety will also offer seasonal influenza vaccines ("flu shots") to individuals receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Pre-registration for a flu shot is not required.

All clinics, unless otherwise noted on the registration 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.

Upcoming clinics include (subject to change):

- Thursday, December 2nd: 2 PM - 4 PM
- Tuesday, December 7th: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Thursday, December 9th: 2 PM - 4 PM
- Tuesday, December 14th: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Thursday, December 16th: 2 PM - 4 PM

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  
awang@montcopa.org

Please see the November 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**

Winter Weather Product Reminder

With winter quickly approaching, the Department of Public Safety 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.
CHOP King of Prussia Hospital Opening to be Delayed

In September, 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.

Cradlepoint Modem Deployment Continues for Fire Agencies

The Department of Public Safety has moved 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.
Spring 2022 Law Enforcement Conference Registration Open

This spring, the Department of Public Safety will host a regional law enforcement conference at Normandy Farm Hotel & Conference Center (1401 Morris Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422). It is scheduled for Thursday, April 7, 2022, from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

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 or scan the QR code to the right. To view a copy of the conference flyer, see the November Notices. Please note that this conference is for law enforcement ONLY and all registrants will be vetted before registration is confirmed.

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-76bb1a44b50. 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.