

EMS Bureau

My name is William Miller. I am the Executive Director and Chief of McKeesport Ambulance Authority, a position that I have held since 1997. I have been involved in public safety since 1989 starting as a volunteer firefighter and EMT.

McKeesport Ambulance Authority provides emergency EMS coverage for the Cities of McKeesport and Duquesne and the Boroughs of Dravosburg, Glassport and Port Vue. We respond to nearly 10,000 emergency requests per year, as well as 2500 requests for non-emergency services.

EMS agencies across the State of Pennsylvania rely on the Bureau of EMS for coordination and pertinent guidelines. The Bureau is tasked with supplying EMS agencies with information, education, regulations and protocols, as well as licensing requirements.

We, as EMS agencies, appreciate the time and work that goes into these different areas to help keep our staff's current with new policies and trends in EMS. During the Covid-19 pandemic we received variances in protocols, staffing standards were adjusted as well as paramedics being trained to nasal swabbing for testing purposes and the administration of Covid-19 vaccines. EMS was the frontline throughout the pandemic.

Until recently, I am not sure that most of us (EMS) understood the hierarchy of the Pennsylvania State Health Department and where EMS fall in that line. It was during a recent meeting with Representative Nick Pisciotto that we were told that the EMS Bureau is actually about three levels below the Secretary of Health, as far as report to levels. If one were to look the Department of Health's Executive Leadership web page, there is not even a mention of the EMS Bureau or its Director.

In comparison to the EMS Bureau, the fire service in Pennsylvania has its own Office of the State Fire Commissioner who is tasked with similar jobs as they relate fire training. Since there is not a listing on the EMS Bureau pages of employees, we are going what we believe to be true that there are six employees in the Bureau (four of which are vacant). The State Fire Commissioner's Office has

listed on their web page twenty five employees with one vacancy. These employees are listed by name with contact information and for the specialty that they cover. Under Title 35 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, the Fire Commissioner reports directly to the Governor of the State, meanwhile the Director of the EMS Bureau has to report to at least the Secretary of Health for the State.

Furthermore, for the last full years that information was readily available, there is a very large difference in the number of calls that each public safety sector has responded to. For the year end of 2021, the fire departments in Pennsylvania that report through Penn FIRS (the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System) shows that there were 224,979 responses reported, of which, approximately 38% were EMS related. For the year ending 2020, there were 2,204,969 EMS responses reported across the State.

This is not meant to take anything away from the job the fire departments do across this State. But is meant to show the disparity in how each is handled at the State level. While a completely separate EMS Commissioners Office may or may not be the answer EMS feels that we should have a clearer line of communication and representation and at a higher level.