

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

RICH FITZGERALD  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

## Suburban Fire Department QRS Dispatch Changes as a result of COVID-19

Date: April 1, 2020

To: All suburban Fire Department QRS providers

RE: Changes at ACES 9-1-1 with Dispatch of QRS providers due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, as well as the urging and unanimous support of the Allegheny County EMS Council, **effective 0700 hrs on 4/3/2020 Allegheny County 9-1-1 will no longer, automatically, dispatch QRS Fire Departments to suburban EMS calls.** This decision was not made lightly and comes only after weeks of discussion and thoughtful consideration. There are several benefits we have embraced.

- The first is to protect the fire crews who may eventually become first line EMS responders should the pandemic drastically effect the EMS ranks. National EMS leadership has predicted as much as a 50% reduction in the EMS workforce as the COVID-19 Pandemic spreads across the US. One of the drastic steps that has been taken in several states is changing EMS legislation and allowing retired and uncertified persons to complete EMS crews. We need to protect these fire-based resources if they are needed to be pressed into service to replace traditional EMS crews.
- We are also extremely limited in the PPE we are distributing to the county. Not only are we supporting public safety, but we must supply long-term care facilities, skilled nursing homes and in some cases hospital systems. As first responders we can no longer send the waves of response we did two months ago. We must preserve every single respirator and gown that is used, and only use them when absolutely necessary.

What we are not doing is locking up every QRS in the county, in their garage. We are only taking the drastic step of removing the automatic dispatch from the run cards during the duration of this outbreak. Should an EMS crew request a QRS response, Allegheny County 9-1-1 Dispatchers (TCO) will honor that request without delay. We realize that, in the right situation, QRS is a vital piece of a large response strategy. We encourage you to communicate with your respective EMS agencies to formulate a strategy that will ensure the sustainability of EMS capability and deliver the support QRS provides, when necessary.

This aligns with the steps that most QRS agencies in the county have already taken in limiting their response. This has created a difficult system to manage for both fire and AC9-1-1. This will standardize the counties response and eliminate the confusion that is already taking place as QRS agencies elect not to respond on calls.

We realize the severe step we are taking, but this unprecedented problem requires unprecedented solutions. COVID-19 is unlike any challenge we have faced in modern public safety and we, as a county, must adopt steps to ensure the sustainability of EMS for the duration of this event. But we hope for a rapid resolution to this pandemic and when we can return to so many normal aspects of our lives. We thank you for your support in this matter and look forward to the time we can return QRS to their normal operations.

Chief Matt Brown

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