

TESTIMONY August 1, 2023

Matt Brown

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Welcome to the Allegheny County Department of Emergency Services and thank you Senators and Representatives for this opportunity.

I have 39 years in all levels of emergency services as a volunteer firefighter, EMT, hazardous Materials Technician/Specialist, private sector heavy industrial emergency response and county government.

ACES consists of 4 divisions:

- 9-1-1 Communications
- EMA (emergency management agency)
- Fire Training Academy
- Fire Marshal's Office

The PA Region 13 All Hazards Task Force, which ACES acts as the home base and fiduciary for, is the primary support to the current Strike Team.

I am far from a USAR expert or specialist. But I am well aware of the need and benefits of this resource, as a county EMC and as a resident. As an EMC, USAR is another tool within my tool box of options and resource capabilities in managing emergencies.

The frequency and complexity of incidents nationwide continue to challenge public safety at every level. In my opinion, the level of capability and expertise of the responders is a matter for the public to consider. What do we want, what do we need, what is the expectation? The expectation is to have the very best, qualified response, as quickly as possible.

It is not just the full deployment of these specialty units, like the Strike Team, that our region needs or benefits from. It is also the every-day response. The Strike Team members are members of fire departments, EMS agencies, police officers and emergency managers. They are woven within the fabric of our public safety capabilities every day and we benefit from that capability as well. As seen in

recent incidents like our Harmar train derailment in May 2022 and several recent local emerging incidents where elements of the Strike Team were utilized to assist and/or consult with.

USAR elements are much more than the specialized equipment. As is the case for state of the art NG 9-1-1 operations. The advanced technology and equipment still require levels of continuously improved education, experience and expertise from those that operate and function in the systems.

In either case, 9-1-1 communications or USAR operations, they require standards, policies and procedures to meet or exceed local, state and federal requirements. The Strike Team, with the support of the PA Region 13 Task force, strives to meet these standards and federal typing.

So what do our residents, visitors and first responders expect? Timely, efficient and expert level response that has the ability to adapt and overcome any and all challenges and threats. And that fits the set standards. The issue is how do we continue to improve and sustain these capabilities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.