

**TESTIMONY TO THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS  
& EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE  
AND THE  
MAJORITY POLICY COMMITTEE  
ADAMS COUNTY FIRE TRAINING CENTER,  
GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA  
OCTOBER 25, 2013**

**By Ken Kime, President**

**Adams County Volunteer Emergency Services**

On behalf of the members of the Adams County Volunteer Emergency Services Association I extend greetings to all of the committee members and welcome you to our home, Adams County. My name is Ken Kime and as President of ACVESA it is my privilege to represent emergency services in Adams County. I also serve as the President of the Gettysburg Fire Department to which I have over 24 years of service and also past chief of the department.

Adams County can boast fire protection for over 200 years and is still a volunteer response with career staffing supplementing most EMS operations. Call volumes are rising while funding and memberships are decreasing. ACVESA has a membership of just over 3400 members however a statistical survey of several departments has yielded 18-22% of those members are actively running calls and since 2005 we have seen a nearly 25% decrease in membership.

I know you will be hearing numerous statistics today regarding the fire service in PA so I will speak to efforts here in Adams County to maintain the volunteer service.

Prior to the joint study the fire departments in Adams County had embarked on their own to change the service to meet new demands and pressures. Several

departments have merged; others have right sized apparatus fleets, changed running assignments to utilize mutual aid more affectively and not duplicating specialized apparatus. However we realize we cannot change everything on our own, and that leads me to the joint study.

The joint funding study started numerous conversations within the municipalities and the fire departments, at first uneasiness, we had never attempted such a study, it was time to reveal budgets, learn who each was, how would the end result impact the volunteers? As the study unfolded it was becoming clear, the majority understood the old status quo could not continue and information flowed rather freely. When the study was released it did cause concern among many departments regarding another tax, however, once one looked past just the taxing authority other information became clear. The study has become a catalyst for conversations between departments, the municipalities, and the citizens they serve. Along each step of the way the municipalities and the fire service have been at the table together. It is rather unique in PA that the legal entity responsible for the emergency services to residents most often does not own a single piece of equipment or have any working knowledge of the volunteer service, here in Adams County we are quickly changing the latter.

Our work for emergency services does not end at the local municipal level but extends to the county itself. Emergency services enjoy and respect the ability to be part and parcel to many county wide initiatives such as the new P.25 800Mhz radio project. This project has involved all stake holders from the beginning and when it came time for the newly elected commissioners to vote to raise taxes for the project the fire service was on the front page of the local newspapers supporting their work. Today we find ourselves involved in an unforeseen project, that of a county wide delivery of EMS. As Wellspan prepares to exit their delivery of pre-hospital EMS many questions and concerns have arisen. Through the county commissioners a steering committee has already started work to define a long term goal for the potential move from fire based EMS to a county wide model. One might argue the county is not responsible for the delivery of EMS, however they provide the outreach to all involved, including the citizens.

While these examples are successes being gained locally we are not immune to issues hurting the volunteer service.

A workman's compensation insurance issue has become a problem where one department in particular had their own insurance only to lose it due to the cancer presumption. Finding no other insurance provider they turned to the statewide insurance fund and over a 2 year period have seen an over 150% increase in premiums.

Like many areas along the Southern tier of PA we continue to see an influx of retirees from areas to our South, as this population ages the demands for services will continue to go up for a patient that historically does not always cover all expenses for service due to Medicare reimbursements and the American Healthcare Affordability Act has forthcoming initiatives that will have further impact on emergency medical services.

We need to continue and grow partnerships with the state. We need to stop being the leader, that is, the leader who continually ranks among the highest in firefighter/civilian fire deaths and injury in the United States. We need special interest to stop gutting home sprinklers out of the UCC. We need to be serious about recruitment and retention to get our staffing to more appropriate levels at all times of the day or day of week. While it should remain at a local/regional level we need tools at the state level. And we need to realize retaining experienced firefighters is as important as recruiting the next generation. We need common sense reporting procedures for small games of chance and other fund raising activities. We need to stop being primarily fundraisers and have the volunteer in training, answering calls, or spending additional time with their families.

By building partnerships with all stakeholders I believe we can continue to provide professional emergency services utilizing volunteers however the time to act is now. If we do nothing it will only be a matter of time until career staffing is needed to provide emergency services and in Adams County the tax millage will go from the proposed .25 mil to 4.25 mils.