



Fire, Rescue & EMS

Serving
Bethesda
Chevy Chase
NW Washington DC

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Emergency DC: 301.652.1000

BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE RESCUE SQUAD, INC

July 29, 2021

Via Email and First-Class U.S. Mail

John A. Donnelly, Sr.
Fire and EMS Chief
District of Columbia Fire and EMS Department
2000 14th Street, NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Chief Donnelly:

I am writing to notify you that the Board of Directors of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, Inc. (BCCRS or Rescue Squad) voted last night to provide the District of Columbia Fire and EMS Department (DC FEMS) with notice of its intent to terminate the May 2001 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the DC FEMS and BCCRS on December 31, 2021. This will end DC residents' ability to directly request our services in upper Northwest DC on January 1, 2022, and complies with the minimum sixty-day notice required in the MOU. After this date, BCCRS will continue to respond to any requests for service that are dispatched through the Montgomery County Public Safety Communications Center as part of the Council of Governments mutual aid process.

BCCRS is proud of its long service to the District of Columbia and appreciates the community's support since its founding in the District in 1937. However, a careful review of the impact of the Rescue Squad's service in DC found that operating a 10-digit emergency telephone number and providing emergency service from BCCRS to the District outside of governmental mutual aid agreements is no longer in the best interest of DC residents. This analysis considered the improvements in DC FEMS resources dedicated to EMS operations, the increasing importance of a systems approach to EMS delivery, the advent of the cell phone as a primary means of communications, and the corresponding improvements in Enhanced (and future Next Generation) 911 services. Each of these factors supports our decision.

Volunteer, the experience of a lifetime!

We have heard from Advisory Neighborhood Commission members that they wish to know more about how mutual aid processes work and the dispatch of the closest appropriate emergency resources based on an automatic aid concept. The extension of existing Metropolitan Washington Council of Government agreements to include automatic dispatch processes is beyond the authority of BCCRS to implement. Further, based on the current deployment of resources in Montgomery County, BCCRS would not normally be the closest department to most DC responses. However, automatic aid is a concept that we believe deserves serious consideration and debate among the appropriate elected officials and other stakeholders to fully optimize the border responses in both DC and Montgomery County.

As noted above, BCCRS will continue to provide EMS service under the May 2001 MOU until December 31, 2021. We are continuing with public education and outreach efforts to DC residents and facilities to which we frequently respond to inform them of this decision.

BCCRS will also be engaging our telecom provider to identify a transition plan for our 301-652-1000 emergency number beginning on January 1, 2022. It is our intent to provide automatic transfer of calls made to 301-652-1000 directly to a number identified by the DC Office of Unified Communication to facilitate screening and dispatch of resources as needed for individuals that still attempt to use the legacy number. It would assist us in developing this transition plan if you could designate a technical point of contact that could best advise us in creating an effective transition plan.

If you have suggestions for other steps we can take to ensure that the end to our non-mutual aid service is smooth and widely understood, we would welcome your suggestions.

I would also like to thank you for the support that BCCRS has received from DC Fire and EMS over the past 80+ years. If we can be of assistance to you in the future, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Edward G. Sherburne
Fire/Rescue Chief

cc: Honorable Mary Cheh, DC City Council, Ward 3
Honorable Janise Lewis-George, DC City Council, Ward 4
Honorable Andrew Friedson, Montgomery County Council, District 1