



SPRING 2020

NEWSLETTER

SERVING THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1937

We Are All in This Together

Dear Neighbors and Friends,

We don't have to tell you that we are facing a unique challenge. In my several decades as a member of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, I have responded to train crashes, assassination attempts, multi-building fires, the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and more. But the situation presented by COVID-19 is different, for many reasons. One of those is that we rely on you more than ever.

As I write this, we are beginning to see the impact of COVID-19 on the greater DC area. I hope that when you read this, the situation hasn't become exponentially worse, but with a virus like this, that is very possible. Listening to the guidance coming from public health officials is critical. Social distancing, quarantine and isolation are not fun, but they will save lives. Please continue to follow the recommendations of state and county leaders; while you may not feel you are at risk, your actions could impact the health and safety of the entire community.

While the current pandemic is unprecedented, our EMS clinicians are ready. We have been working closely with our colleagues in Montgomery County Fire and Rescue to implement policies to protect the public, our patients and our firefighters, EMTs and paramedics. We have assembled a COVID-19 Task Force composed of Rescue Squad members who have advanced education and experience in public health, emergency management, epidemiology, emergency medical care, data analysis, and other relevant areas to lead the way—and they truly have, often serving as a resource for the County in addition to our department. Other activities we have undertaken to prepare include:

- ✓ Establishing specialized training and protocols to identify the symptoms of COVID-19 and safely provide life-saving treatments.
- ✓ Conducting data analysis and forecasting to optimize staffing levels and ensure operational readiness.
- ✓ Implementing strict cleaning and decontamination procedures as well as protocols for monitoring the health of our volunteers and staff.



Drew Knight, a live-in volunteer member of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad's Sunday Night Crew, suits up in protective equipment to treat a patient with potential COVID-19 symptoms.

I am proud to say that the more than 100 active volunteer members of the Squad have embraced these activities and much more. Despite the known risks to themselves and the time away from their families, they have tackled this challenge like all the others—head on, committed to their community, their patients and each other.

Just as you count on us, we count on you. From personal protective equipment to cleaning supplies to "no touch" systems to replace some station doors, we have already incurred significant costs in response to this crisis. At the same time, we've had to cancel some of our most reliable fundraising events, including our annual Rescue1Run. If you are looking for ways to support the community's response to COVID-19, or you typically make a donation to the Squad later in the year, please consider using the enclosed envelope or visiting bccrs.org/donate and making a contribution. Your support makes a difference.

We are all in this together.

Sincerely,
Ken Holden
BCCRS President



The Impact of COVID-19 on How We Operate

The **Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad** is fully engaged with our partner agencies to respond to the current COVID-19 pandemic. We are making changes to operations and the way we interact with the community to ensure the safety of patients, responders and the community at large. Modifications to our operations are consistent with recommendations by the CDC, state and county officials, and local hospitals.

- Don't be surprised if you see our personnel wearing surgical masks routinely on calls, or if they put on protective gowns or masks after doing an initial assessment. This is for everyone's protection and is based on guidance received from local and national health authorities.
- EMTs and paramedics may place a surgical mask on you as well, to protect themselves, your family and other patients and providers at the hospital. If you have a mask, please consider putting it on before we arrive.
- Our EMS clinicians may advise you to stay at home if you meet the evidence-based criteria outlined by the Maryland Institute for EMS Systems and endorsed by the Montgomery County EMS medical director. For COVID-19 patients with mild to moderate symptoms, staying at home is often the safest option.
- We are unable to transport family members or acquaintances of the patient in the ambulance except in certain cases involving children. This is consistent with general prohibitions on visitors in hospital emergency departments. We recommend that family members provide their contact information to the EMS crew so it can be communicated to the hospital personnel.
- We can no longer accept visitors of any kind at our station until the resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes assistance with routine health monitoring (such as blood pressure checks), station tours, and other citizen inquiries.
- Citizen ride-alongs with Rescue Squad crews are no longer permitted.
- The BCCRS Anastasia/Civic Room is closed to public events.
- We are unable to accept food donations from individuals other than canned or dry goods in their original packaging or meals provided by a restaurant or caterer. Restaurants and other commercial establishments interested in donating meals for our personnel should contact the rescue squad in advance.



Early on, the Rescue Squad implemented social distancing policies, as can be seen during this nightly crew meeting at the beginning of a shift. Since this photo was taken, we have also adopted other precautions, including wearing cloth face masks while in the station and during training exercises.

WHEN TO CALL

Think you or a family member has COVID-19 but you're not sure when to call for EMS? The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises calling for life-threatening symptoms such as:

- trouble breathing
- persistent chest pain
- new confusion or altered mental status
- signs of low oxygen saturation, such as bluish lips or face.

When you call 911 or the BCCRS emergency line, please notify the call-taker that you think you, the person you're caring for or anyone in your home has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and follow the instructions you receive.

For typical flu-like symptoms, such as cough and fever, the safest option for you and for healthcare providers is to contact your physician or local health department first and get advice on what to do. Visiting the emergency room may put you and others at more risk.

For information about testing, access to healthcare and mental health services, and other non-emergency COVID-related matters, please contact your healthcare provider or local health department or dial 311. Calls to 911 or the BCCRS emergency line for non-emergent questions or concerns can put a strain on the emergency communications center and the entire EMS system, leading to longer response times, crowded emergency rooms and excess stress on first responders.

Assistant Chief Seth Kelly, MD, Awarded Prestigious Fellowship

When Seth Kelly first joined the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad two decades ago, he had recently completed his pre-med requirements and was thinking of attending medical school. Instead, he found himself committed to the Squad, quickly rising through the ranks as a firefighter/EMT, a night crew officer and eventually deputy chief. When not spending countless hours responding to calls, mentoring other Squad members and managing the department, he had a successful career in both the public and private sectors in consulting and homeland security policy, obtaining an MBA along the way.

Eventually, he came back to the idea of a career in medicine, knowing that what he loved most about his time at the Rescue Squad was the chance to help others while always learning something new. Seth attended medical school at Texas A&M University and is now finishing his residency in emergency medicine at the University of Maryland, where in addition to seeing patients in the emergency department, he is currently serving in the operations section executing the University of Maryland Medical System response to COVID across the state.

Throughout his arduous training, he has always remained dedicated to the Squad, helping in whatever way possible, even while living 1500 miles away during medical school and working a busy schedule as a resident.

This summer, Seth will take the next step on his journey: a fellowship in emergency medical services at the University of Pittsburgh, one of the most renowned EMS medicine programs in the nation. At the annual meeting of the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP) in January, Seth received the NAEMSP/Stryker EMS Medical Director Fellowship—an award that will fund a portion of his training to become an EMS medical director, a critical role in leading and improving EMS systems.

"When I joined the Rescue Squad in 1999, I knew medicine might be in my future, but I never pictured the path I would take to get there. I am grateful for the opportunities the Squad has given me, and I look forward to finding ways to continue to contribute as I take this next step in my training," Seth said.

"The decision to award Dr. Kelly with this fellowship was unanimous—we're all looking forward to the rest of his career in EMS medicine," said NAEMSP President David K. Tan, MD.

Rescue Squad Chief Ned Sherburne echoed those sentiments. "Seth has volunteered thousands of hours serving our community and the entire fire and EMS profession, contributing as much as any individual I've known in my four decades at the Rescue Squad," he said. "It's exciting to see his leadership continue as he takes this next step."



BCCRS Assistant Chief Seth Kelly, MD (far right), was awarded the 2020 NAEMSP/Stryker EMS Medical Director Fellowship at the National Association of EMS Physicians annual meeting. Here he is joined by former and current BCCRS members at the meeting: (From left to right) BCCRS Chief Ned Sherburne; former member Jon Ehrenfeld, now the mobile integrated health program manager for the Seattle Fire Department; former junior member David Page, director of the Prehospital Care Research Forum; former member Hilary Gates, senior editorial and program director for EMS World; EMS Captain and Paramedic Mario Weber; and life member and Paramedic Michael Gerber.

Thank You!

To all the individuals and local businesses who have supported us during this time, thank you! From donations that help us purchase masks, to meals for our volunteer crews, to hand sanitizer to keep our patients and our people safe, every contribution helps us help you. Our supporters are too numerous to name here, but be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to see some of the local businesses who have kept us well fed and supplied. Thank you for proving once again that we serve a wonderful community full of neighbors helping neighbors.

TRAINING NEVER STOPS



Although we've been busy focusing on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, Rescue Squad members continue to train for every type of emergency. Here, Monday Night Crew Captain Leo Ruiz and several BCCRS firefighter/EMTs practice using life-saving rescue equipment.



**We Can't Do It Without
Your Help – Please Make
a Donation Today**

Whether responding to Covid-19 or other medical emergencies, fires, or rescue incidents, we can't do our job without your help. The majority of our operating budget comes from generous individual donors like you. These donations help us buy medical equipment and supplies, purchase ambulances and rescue vehicles, and answer the call approximately 8,000 times a year—that's one call every hour, all day, throughout the year.

And rest assured, your donation will be well spent. More than 95 cents of every dollar donated goes to operations, equipment and other non-fundraising expenses. That's one reason why Charity Navigator has given us its 4-Star rating (the highest available).

Please make a donation today by sending a check in the enclosed envelope, visiting bccrs.org/donate or contributing through the Combined Federal Campaign Special Solicitation using CFC #19223.

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FIRE, RESCUE & EMS

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