



NEWSLETTER

SERVING THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1937

Update on BCCRS COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for healthcare workers and emergency personnel in practically every country in the world. And nowhere is this more true than at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad.



Changes in Operations

Virtually every aspect of the Rescue Squad's operations have been impacted by the pandemic. New protocols help to identify and screen potential COVID-19 patients when they call for help. Emergency crews use new measures to reduce exposure risk, for example, by asking to meet ambulatory patients at the front door. The number of crew members interacting with a potential COVID-19 patient is minimized to reduce contact risk to emergency personnel and use of scarce personal protective equipment (PPE). In emergency situations where aerosolized respiratory droplets are likely – such as on calls for cardiac arrest or respiratory distress – a full complement of PPE-equipped and trained personnel provide emergency care. And once a patient has been transported to the hospital and care has been transferred, BCCRS personnel follow comprehensive decontamination and procedures at the hospital and back at the station. The Rescue Squad is enforcing health protocols, including face coverings, social distancing, and other precautions in the station to minimize the risk that any responder is a source of transmission.

Unique Talents on BCCRS' COVID Task Force

BCCRS' response to the pandemic has been guided by a unique group of volunteer paramedics, firefighters

and EMS personnel, several of whom have specialized public health backgrounds. Megan O'Brien, a Ph.D epidemiologist by day, chairs the Squad's COVID-19 task force. Others have backgrounds in statistical modeling and public health BCCRS' analysis and insights have helped inform and shape Montgomery County's successful emergency response to the pandemic.

Volunteer EMTs, Paramedics and Firefighters Provide "Surge" Staffing

Operationally, BCCRS bolstered its staffing to respond to the early surge in COVID-19 patients. BCCRS volunteers provided more than 1,400 hours of surge staffing – placing extra ambulances and paramedic units in service beyond the Squad's normal compliment of units. During the height of the surge, BCCRS responded to approximately 250 COVID-19 patients. And while the peak is down, BCCRS and other units in Montgomery County continue to respond to emergency calls from patients with actual or suspected COVID-19 – and continue to follow the heightened protocols that keep patients, crews and others safe. ■

BCCRS Volunteer, Board Member Completes Ultra-Run to Benefit First Responders



Ashley Donovan, a Ph.D chemist and educator by day and a BCCRS volunteer EMT and Board member at night (and on weekends), completed an 86-mile ultra-run on Sunday, May 7. She did this by running the ~0.2 mi loop around our station at 5020 Battery Lane **for 24 hours**. The Rescue1UltraRun raised awareness of the importance of volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics in our emergency medical systems. It also raised funds for **BCCRS** and **Feed the Fight**, a local nonprofit coordinating meal deliveries to frontline medical and response workers in our area. Ashley's run raised more than \$11,000 – well over her \$10,000 goal. Thank you to those who supported this extraordinary effort. ■

Also in this edition:

- Fall/Winter Safety Tips
- BCCRS Services and Operational Update

FALL/WINTER Safety Tips



Here are some safety tips for the coming months – more can be found on our website at bccrs.org/safety:



- **Smoke Detectors:** Maryland law now requires most homes to have 10-year, sealed smoke detectors on each floor of a resident dwelling. Battery powered alarms do not meet this requirement. Sealed alarms include a 10-year battery inside the detector, which never needs to be changed.



- **Children's Access to 911:** With children staying home more, there is an even greater chance that someone in your home might have to dial 911 or the Rescue Squad's Washington, DC, emergency number. Make sure your kids not only know the number, but know how to dial it using whatever device is most likely to be handy. Many homes no longer have landlines, so make sure they know how to use your cell phone for emergency calls



- **Carbon monoxide (the silent killer):** It's important to take steps to prevent the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning in your home. A colorless, odorless gas, carbon monoxide sends more than 50,000 people to emergency rooms in the U.S. each year and kills more than 400. Make sure your home has a working carbon monoxide detector, and don't ignore its alarms. Never leave a vehicle running in a closed garage or run generators or other gas-powered engines in enclosed spaces. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get to fresh air immediately and dial 911.

BCCRS Emergency Services Did You Know?

Operations

BCCRS staffs and operates four emergency response vehicles – two ambulances, one medic unit, and one heavy fire/rescue squad – from our main station at Battery Lane and Old Georgetown Road. We also staff an ambulance from Fire Station 26 on Democracy Blvd – near Montgomery Mall. We are integrated into the County's fire/rescue system and work closely with other area departments (e.g., Bethesda, Glen Echo, Cabin John) to provide prompt, high-quality emergency services.

- BCCRS is the only area Department providing 24/7 ambulance service to downtown Bethesda, Chevy Chase and nearby areas.
- 75% of our staffing is provided by trained and certified volunteer personnel.
- Last year, BCCRS responded to ~ 8,000 emergency calls – almost one per hour, every day, throughout the year. This includes calls to Friendship Village (466), Glen Echo (314), Somerset (45), Downtown Bethesda (1,512), and North Bethesda (1330).

BCCRS is managed exclusively and staffed primarily by volunteer personnel:

- 100+ County-certified volunteer service providers – i.e., paramedics, firefighters and EMTs who meet minimum staffing requirements
- 4 County-certified volunteer command officers (with combined 100+ years of MCFRS service)
- 13 County-certified volunteer operational officers fire/EMS officers (captain and lieutenant).
- BCCRS personnel completed 19,000+ hours of formal fire/rescue/EMS training in FY 2019 (which does not include in-station training)

Governance and Transparency

On the governance front, BCCRS is governed by a 12-person board of directors. We have received a 4-star rating by Charity Navigator (its highest rating) and have been a featured charity in the Chronicle of Philanthropy. Due to volunteer contributions and commitment, our overhead is low, and 95% of donations used for operations and other non-fundraising purposes (Source: IRS 990)

Funding and County Support

In addition, unlike other area departments, the majority of our operating funds come from local residents and area foundations. That's why donations from area residents are critical to BCCRS' ability to provide fast, high-quality service to our community. ■

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, Inc.
FIRE, RESCUE & EMS

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