



NEWS RELEASE

York County Public Affairs

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Gail Whittaker, Public Information Officer

(757) 890-3310 desk - (757) 817-2665 cell

whittgl@yorkcounty.gov

York County Dept. of Fire & Life Safety Wins Regional Peninsulas EMS (PEMS) Council Awards

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York County's Department of Fire & Life Safety is the recipient of two 2020 Regional EMS awards and a partner in another. Award-winners will compete for the 2020 Governor's EMS Awards, which will be announced later this year. The award-winning categories and descriptions are:

- **Special Recognition Award - Outstanding EMS Call** – *York County Department of Fire and Life Safety – December 22, 2019 75 vehicle Crash on Interstate 64.*

Foggy conditions and temperatures close to freezing caused a chain reaction/vehicle pile-up on the Queens Creek Bridge on westbound Interstate 64. Seventy-five vehicles were involved in this accident that required mutual aid assistance with neighboring jurisdictions and military base response units. Fifty-one patients were seen at local hospitals with 46 transported by EMS. Miraculously, there were no fatalities and no vehicles went over the guard rail into the creek below, no hazardous material spills occurred and no large vehicles (buses, tow trucks, tractor trailers) were involved. The department's established incident plans and positive working relationships with nearby departments were key to a successful response and recovery mission.

- **Outstanding Contribution to EMS Preparedness and Response** – *Sherl Emerson, York County Department of Fire and Life Safety.*

After almost 43 years of service to York County, 39 years with the Department of Fire & Life Safety, Mrs. Emerson retired from her important role with the department as Senior Administrative Services Manager. Over the course of her almost four decades with the department, Mrs. Emerson participated in many projects and expansions that saw the number of fire stations double; the establishment of an Emergency Operations Center; evolving technology, reporting and financial management systems; and her

performance as direct assistant to the Fire Chief. She has earned the respect and admiration from the department personnel and from Fire/EMS organizations throughout the region.

- **Innovation Excellence in EMS** – *Peninsulas COVID-19 Operations Center (City of Hampton, City of Newport News, City of Poquoson, City of Williamsburg, James City County, York County, Bon Secours Mary Immaculate Hospital, Hampton VA Medical Center, Riverside Doctors Hospital of Williamsburg, Riverside Regional Medical Center, Sentara CarePlex Hospital, Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Navy Regional Mid-Atlantic, Hampton/Peninsula Health Districts, Peninsulas EMS Council).*

The COVID-19 Operations Center, formed on March 16, 2020 to serve as an Incident Management Team, was a direct result of the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic that began in our region in early March. The Operations Center served as a hub for information gathering and sharing, and a resource portal to provide daily real-time updates. As the scope of the pandemic continues to evolve, the Operations Center can be activated to a higher level within a short timeframe. The Department of Fire and Life Safety along with the other fire/rescue departments on the Peninsula were instrumental in establishing this collaborative effort. (The nomination was submitted by York County).

For more information about these award winners, please call York County Fire & Life Safety at (757) 890-3600.

The mission of the Peninsulas EMS Council is to assist local emergency medical services components and to assess, identify, coordinate, plan and implement an efficient and effective regional emergency medical services delivery system in partnership with the Virginia Office of EMS and the Virginia EMS Advisory Board. More information about the Council is available online at <http://peninsulas.vaems.org/>.