

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY AND FIRE COMMISSIONER BUDGET HEARING WRAP

Friday, February 21, 2025



General Overview:

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) Director David Padfield and Commissioner Thomas Cook, Office of the State Fire Commissioner (OSFC), testified before the House Appropriations Committee this afternoon. House Republicans focused questions on what is being done to support local fire companies and the failure of the governor's budget proposal to fully account for statewide needs in emergency services.

Key Takeaways:

- Committee members offered their support for local fire companies – comprised mostly of volunteers – and reaffirmed their commitment to helping them in any way possible.
- There are significant concerns about the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters, shared by all Pennsylvanians, including the committee members and the OSFC. Committee members and the OSFC showed a united front in addressing this pressing issue. Commissioner Cook emphasized that these efforts do not always require more funding but rather community involvement.
- Committee members questioned the PEMA Director regarding the governor's proposal to zero their request for \$8 million in funding for urban search and rescue.
 - This line item, which supports assets to respond to building collapse throughout Pennsylvania, would particularly impact the western portion of the state. The potential consequences of this cut were a key concern for the committee members.
- The committee expressed concerns about the 911 Fund administration and the need to ensure that rural Pennsylvania counties are not underfunded for this vital service. This underscores the importance of equitable distribution and the need to incorporate all stakeholders' feedback.

Notable Q&A:



Rep. Josh Kail asks the PEMA Director why their request for \$8 million in Urban Search and Rescue was zeroed out by the governor.

Rep. Marci Mustello discusses volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention with the State Fire Commissioner.



Rep. Eric Nelson discusses support for firefighters and cancer prevention efforts for first responders.