

District of Columbia  
Bladensburg\*  
Bowie  
Charles County  
College Park  
Frederick  
Frederick County  
Gaithersburg  
Greenbelt  
Montgomery County  
Prince George's County  
Rockville  
Takoma Park  
Alexandria  
Arlington County  
Fairfax  
Fairfax County  
Falls Church  
Loudoun County  
Manassas  
Manassas Park  
Prince William County  
  
Adjunct Member

**Statement on Behalf of COG Fire Chiefs Committee to COG Board of Directors**  
**Marc S. Bashoor, Fire Chief, Prince George's County Fire/EMS**  
**Chairman, COG Fire Chiefs Committee**

**February 11, 2015**

The National Capital Region COG Fire Chiefs are committed to ensuring the safety of the public, our responders and the WMATA employees within the METRO system at all times. It is imperative that each of us work together to build and maintain a system of operations and response that instills confidence and constantly improves the culture of safety in our response systems.

The area Fire and EMS Departments have been a part of the planning, training and operational response within the WMATA system, since its inception. The six Fire Chiefs whose jurisdictions are directly impacted by the Metrorail system have been intimately involved in the discussions related to the recent incidents surrounding the WMATA Metrorail system.

These six COG Fire Chiefs, working with COG staff, the WMATA Police Chief, the Public Safety Communications and Passenger Rail Safety Subcommittees, and fire department station personnel have taken the following steps in the past 10 days:

1. Tested all underground radio systems
2. Reported all system gaps to WMATA
3. Identified gaps in the radio system testing processes
4. Agreed to weekly testing in the District and bi-weekly testing outside the District
5. Approved a common web-based recordation methodology for radio system quality testing and reporting (draft developed by WMATA)
6. Agreed to a common above ground Incident Command Post methodology
7. Requested additional on-site and web-based training opportunities from WMATA, including 24/7 access to the Landover training facility
8. Offered Fire Department personnel to assist as train-the-trainers where possible

In addition, WMATA has made the following commitments to the COG Fire Chiefs:

1. Agreed to have "boots on the ground" to investigate system deficiencies within 24 hours
2. Conceptually agreed to radio system repairs within one to two days
3. Agreed to host the web-based reporting system, with protocols which will email-notify responsible parties within each jurisdiction when deficiencies are noted and updates or repairs to the deficiencies are made
4. Agreed to the concept of additional training (no specifics at this time)

Identifying solutions to the process for testing and reporting deficiencies in the radio testing, along with the protocols to repair and make notification of repairs is a critical step ensuring the underground portions of the system are safer for everyone. Similarly, agreements to collaborate on testing, reporting and repair is a critical step in the public safety continuum.

It is certainly true that the radio system is aging with the rest of the infrastructure. Through the Council of Governments, discussions continue to identify funding for a system-wide radio system evaluation, which will ensure all previously unidentified gaps and improvement solutions are identified swiftly.

The COG Fire Chiefs have directed the COG Senior Operations Chiefs along with the Passenger Rail Safety and Public Safety Communications Subcommittees to evaluate all operational procedures over the next 30 days. They will report back in April to identify opportunities for standardizing regional protocols and response improvements while also identifying safety and training protocol enhancements.

Training for first responders is a critical component to ensuring safety for everyone in the WMATA system. Many personnel have been afforded the opportunity to train at the current WMATA training facility on Pennsy Drive in Prince George's County. There has been an active and ongoing training and exercise program between WMATA and the area Fire Departments, to include tabletop, functional, and full-scale exercises remote of the Pennsy Drive training facility. As stated above, the COG Fire Chiefs are requesting additional training opportunities at the WMATA facility, including 24/7 availability. However, training at the Landover facility alone is not a practical solution to the training needs. A combination of Landover-based and computer or simulator-based opportunities along with system-wide opportunities for access to underground spaces during off-hours will ensure maximum exposure for the thousands of firefighters located across the National Capital Region. This will become increasingly important as the system expands into a seventh jurisdiction with the expansion to Dulles Airport impacting Loudoun County.

The safety of WMATA patrons and employees as well as our First Response personnel is of paramount concern. There must be a transparent culture of safety that ensures early 9-1-1 notification and swift standardized dispatch protocols combined with expertly trained employees and responders. All aspects of the emergency response system will be under operational review, including 3<sup>rd</sup> rail power protocols, exhaust systems, emergency evacuation procedures, and door operations to mention a few. Safety will be enhanced with continued collaboration and focus on systemic improvements for the long term.

The COG Fire Chiefs appreciate the opportunity to work together with WMATA to have a quality-improvement process for safety, response and training in the METRO system.