



Public Hearing: Public Safety - Meeting the Needs of Our Firefighters

Pennsylvania's volunteer and paid firefighters answer the call around the clock, often at personal cost, yet fire companies across the Commonwealth are struggling with declining membership, rising equipment and insurance costs, and growing training demands. This hearing will bring together firefighters, fire chiefs, municipal officials, and emergency service experts to discuss practical ways our state government can help.

October 8, 2026 | 1:00 p.m.

Hearing Overview

- **Pledge of Allegiance**
- **Welcome**
- **Opening Remarks**
 - Chairman David H. Rowe
 - State Representative Jeremy Shaffer
- **Testimony from Invited Experts**
- **Member Discussion with Testifiers**
- **Closing Comments & Adjournment**

Testifiers - Panel 1: Micro Perspectives

- **David McWilliams**, Chief, Richland Township Volunteer Fire Department
- **Bruce Hezlep**, Director of Public Safety, Pine Township, and Assistant Chief, Cranberry Volunteer Fire Company
- **Josh Wiegand**, Chief, West Deer Township Volunteer Fire Company #3

Testifiers - Panel 2: Macro Perspectives

- **Matthew Brown**, Chief, Allegheny County Emergency Services
- **Tim Leech**, Vice President, Pittsburgh Fire Fighters
- **John 'J.C.' Tedorski**, Deputy State Fire Commissioner, Office of the State Fire Commissioner

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Chairman David H. Rowe
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Testifiers: Panel 1 - Micro Perspectives



David McWilliams

David McWilliams serves as Chief of the Richland Township Volunteer Fire Department in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. As fire chief, he provides leadership and oversight for the department's emergency response and fire protection efforts, helping ensure the safety and well-being of residents throughout the community. McWilliams is dedicated to serving the Richland Township community and supporting the department's volunteer firefighters and emergency services mission.



Bruce Hezlep

Bruce Hezlep serves as Director of Public Safety for Pine Township in Allegheny County and as Assistant Chief of the Cranberry Township Volunteer Fire Company. He has more than 36 years of experience in leadership, finance, technology, and public safety. A volunteer firefighter for more than two decades, Hezlep has responded to more than 3,000 emergency calls and remains committed to strengthening emergency services and serving his community.



Josh Wiegand

Josh Wiegand serves as Fire Chief of West Deer Township Volunteer Fire Company No. 3 in Allegheny County. A lifelong West Deer Township resident, Wiegand has more than 30 years of experience in public safety and has served as a volunteer firefighter and EMT with West Deer VFC #3 since 1994. He provides leadership for the department's emergency response, firefighter training, recruitment, and community safety efforts. Wiegand also serves as an Assistant Coordinator for West Deer Township Emergency Management and is a member of the Township Board of Supervisors.

Testifiers: Panel 2 - Macro Perspectives



Matthew Brown

Matthew Brown serves as Chief of the Allegheny County Department of Emergency Services, where he oversees countywide emergency preparedness, response, and public safety coordination. He works closely with local municipalities, fire and EMS agencies, law enforcement, and other partners to ensure the county is prepared to respond effectively to emergencies and disasters. Brown has been a leader in Allegheny County's emergency management and preparedness efforts for many years.



Tim Leech

Tim Leech serves as Vice President of the Pittsburgh Fire Fighters. In this role, he represents the interests of Pittsburgh's professional firefighters and advocates for the resources, training, and working conditions needed to support effective fire and emergency response. Leech is committed to protecting both the safety of firefighters and the communities they serve.



John "J.C." Tedorski

John "J.C." Tedorski serves as Deputy State Fire Commissioner for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He brings 39 years of experience in the fire service, beginning as a member of Arnold Volunteer Engine Company No. 2 and advancing through the ranks to assistant chief and city fire chief. Tedorski served as fire chief for 12 years and has also held leadership positions with the Western Pennsylvania Firemen's Association. He has been a Pennsylvania State Fire Academy instructor since 2005 and is active in supporting firefighter training, leadership development, and the well-being of first responders.