

# CITY OF WILKES-BARRE, PENNSYLVANIA

Thomas M. Leighton  
Mayor

Jay Delaney  
Fire Chief



Bureau of Fire  
20-22 East Ross Street  
Wilkes-Barre, PA. 18701-2303  
Phone: (570) 208-4261  
Fax: (570) 208-4258

October 25, 2013

## Testimony – The Challenges of Firefighting Today

Good morning Senators and Honored Guests;

My name is Jay Delaney and I am Fire Chief in the City of Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania and Vice President of the Pennsylvania Career Fire Chiefs Association.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today regarding “The Challenges Facing Fire Fighters Today”.

Today’s modern fire fighter has far more required training and responds to much more than fires. This past year in the City of Wilkes-Barre 85% of the 10,000 responses were not fire related but emergency service related. In many career fire departments our fire fighting staff handles emergency medical service, hazardous materials response, water rescue, high angle rope rescue and basic motor vehicle rescue.

Our staff must complete training in Blood Borne pathogens and Emergency Vehicle Operations as well as numerous non fire related emergency management education and techniques.

Next I will discuss fire fighting education. I can tell you twenty five years ago a career fire fighter was hired, given a 30 day orientation along with fire apparatus driver training, and they were placed on a shift to learn with on-the-job training and very little cost.

Today a fire fighter hired in most career departments has municipal mandated training/education of Essentials of Fire fighting, Fire Fighter 1, Fire Fighter 2, HazMat Awareness and Operations, Vehicle Rescue (PA

Department of Health), Incident Command, Emergency Medical Technician Certification and Emergency Vehicle Operator Course.

This training takes twelve weeks to complete with 480 hours of classroom training.

We are living in a post 9/11 era and all Fire Fighters are emergency responders and need to be trained on all response disciplines, not just fire fighting. The public demands trained, qualified emergency response personnel. The costs projected for this emergency response training is about \$10,000.00 in salary and \$6500.00 per student for the training/education or about \$16,500.00 per fire fighter total. Our budgets cannot continue to absorb all the additional requirements placed on today's fire fighters.

If today's fire departments are to be prepared and positioned for an all hazards response we will need a vision for enhanced financing to offer our fire fighters the best training with the best equipment possible. Fire fighters are being asked to provide additional all hazards response capability than ever before yet there is little funding for this training.

I would like to thank Senator Baker and the entire senate for SB 866 – Fire Fighter Grant Program. This legislation was a huge boost to the Commonwealths emergency response capability. Now we must begin a comprehensive discussion to meet the training needs for the states emergency response community.

The three top issues facing today's career Fire/EMS service are:

Staffing  
Equipment  
Training

James Jay Delaney, EMT/P  
Fire Chief – City of Wilkes-Barre  
Vice President – Pennsylvania Career Fire Chiefs Association