

Watkins Glen Fire Department

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Chief

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Fire & Rescue

In response to the public question: Is the local EMS network capable of responding to potential emergency's the answer is yes. The worst case scenario for the EMS network would be a MCI (Mass casualty incident). In determining if the EMS network is prepared for such an event 3 things must be looked at; training of EMS responders, the ability to transport patients to Emergency care facilities, and the capability of the area hospitals to deal with the injured/ sick. I will do my best to address all 3 in this letter. A little background on me first. I am the Chief of the Watkins Glen fire Department who has the responsibility to respond to this facility in the event of an emergency. I have been in the fire service for 20 years and currently have been working in the fire service on a full time bases for 6 years. I have been through all the ICS classes needed to manage and large scale incident and have all the qualifications per NFPA to be a firefighter in this country. I have been Chief of the department for 5 years and have managed some of the biggest events that we have responded to. For an example the Franklin St block fire two years ago where a major fire threatened the business district and we contained the fire to the original building. I am also in charge of EMS, Rescue and Fire response at WGI for spectator weekends including the annual NASCAR event and the PHISH concert that just happened there. I have a great team of qualified chiefs that can handle any and all emergencies that may happen in our district.

The local EMS network is trained to deal with MCI's (Mass casualty incidents). Every Certified first responder, Emergency Medical Technician, and paramedic receives MCI training during their original class and once every 3 years during their required refresher training. This is in addition to any training that the individual's respective agency might offer. In the Watkins Glen Fire Department this training is offered at least once a year.

The ability to transport patients to an emergency care facility varies on the availability of ambulances, medical helicopters, and other means of transporting patents at the time of the incident. I cannot respond for Schuyler County Volunteer Ambulance Associations ability to respond to such incident, that question should be addressed to them. But what I can say is that, if needed, other ambulances would be called in from other departments and counties. If needed, medical helicopters would be called in to help move the patients. Depending on the size of the incident buses would be called in to move the patients with minor injuries.

Local area hospitals also have procedures to deal with an MCI although questions pertaining to their procedures and state of readiness should be directed to them. I will say that, depending upon the size of the incident, patients would be transported to numerous hospital.

In response to the public question: What are the capabilities of the local first responders to contain an incident that is beyond the scope of the specialized training of the storage facilities employees? This is a difficult question to answer because there are so many “what if” scenarios, but I will do my best. If the incident includes an issue with a tank then yes local first responders can contain the incident. If the issue is a leak from the underground storage facility or a pipeline then local first responders would not be able to stop the leak without the assistance of the storage facility employees.

Every year members of the Watkins Glen Fire Department train with Enterprise (formerly TEPPCO) in emergency shutdown procedures. It is expected that the fire department would also conduct training with Inergy to learn their emergency shutdown procedures. Part of this training would include the locations of emergency shutoffs and the training to use them. Also many members of the department go to state training to learn how to deal with Hazardous materials incidents. The Watkins Glen Fire Department also has equipment, although limited amounts, to identify combustible gases in the air. This equipment would be a vital if there was ever an incident at the facility. The Elmira Fire Departments Hazardous Materials team would also respond to any incident, when needed. They offer highly trained personnel and specialized equipment to assist in such incidents.

Dominick Smith
Chief of the Watkins Glen Fire Dept



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