

Town of Chester
Office of Emergency Management
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February 14, 2011

Public Safety and Security Committee
Room 3600
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106.

Re: Proposal to combine DEMHS with DPS

Dear Committee Members:

I understand you are considering the combining of the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security with the Department of Public Safety.

I am opposed to this move for a couple of reasons.

- ❖ First the DEMHS mission is more encompassing than just law enforcement.
 - Strengthen planning and coordination between emergency management and homeland security;
 - Improve communication and collaboration with other state, federal and local entities;
 - Establish a clear chain of command, train for and exercise responding to disasters; and the on-scene streamlining of organizational structure.
 - Thru managing the distribution of FEMS grant dollars;
 - Enhancement of interoperability of communications
 - Facilitating regional cooperation intra state.
 - Coordinating all responder's protocols when they work together during an emergency...or training for such an event.
 - Very key in the development of 4,000 volunteer citizens, as a third tier of responders. Most of whom are, nor were active fire public health or police.

- ❖ Should this move take place, the ensuing lapse in activity for the learning curve ... would leave us with a setback in our current initiatives. Some of which are mission critical. Such as our interoperability initiative.

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A little background on me: I retired from telecommunications in 2002 where my focus was on the convergence of voice, data and video over a common medium for public safety agencies. (public safety being local fire, EMS and PD, with state police and departments of transportation). I currently am an Emergency Management Director, serve on the Regional (Region 2) Emergency Planning Team, am a voting member of the Statewide Citizens Corps Council, am the Region 2 CERT Coordinator, am a stakeholder on the CT Maritime Commission and a member of the State Energy Assurance Planning Team. Public/private initiative: I recently wrote the protocol for an emergency response to a major maritime, incident on the lower Connecticut River. This was a collaborative effort between responders, the local PSAP, the DEP, DOT, SP, USCG and private (passenger carrying vessel representatives).

If all else fails I would hope that DEMHS management continues in the lead, as they represent a cross section of first responders, responders and citizen emergency response personnel; not just state police activities.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joel P. Severance".

Joel P. Severance
Emergency Management Director