



Joint News Release



Sussex County Paramedic, Patient Killed in Ambulance Crash

Delaware State Police continue investigation

GEORGETOWN, DE (June 17, 2008) – The Delaware State Police continues its investigation this afternoon of a single-vehicle crash early today involving an ambulance, which has claimed the life of a Sussex County paramedic and the patient she was attending.

The crash occurred at approximately 2:40 a.m. Tuesday along a wooded section of Del. Route 24, just east of the Lewes-Rehoboth Beach fire substation in eastern Sussex County. An ambulance from the Mid-Sussex Rescue Squad was en route to Beebe Medical Center in Lewes with a patient, one Sussex County paramedic and two company emergency medical technicians on board.

According to preliminary results of the investigation, the driver of the ambulance observed a deer in the roadway. As the driver steered right to avoid a collision, the ambulance left the road and struck a row of trees. The force and angle of the crash ruptured the rear passenger side of the ambulance in the patient transport compartment, where Sussex County Paramedic Stephanie L. Callaway was tending to a patient.

Firefighters, police and other medics were on scene within minutes. The patient and one of the EMTs on board were both ejected. The patient was pronounced deceased. The ejected EMT and the driver were transported to Beebe Medical Center for treatment of their injuries. Paramedic Callaway, meantime, was transported by ambulance to Beebe Medical Center with multiple traumatic injuries. She died from those injuries.

Paramedic Callaway's passing is the first line-of-duty death for the Sussex County Emergency Medical Services department in its 18-year history.

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“This is a devastating loss to our department, to the fire service and to the entire regional EMS community,” said Sussex County EMS Director Glenn H. Luedtke. “Stephanie was a dedicated and caring professional who was well known in the fire service, the EMS community, local hospitals and among the media. We are mourning the loss of not just our co-worker, but someone who was a friend to so many.”

Paramedic Callaway, 31, was a nearly 5-year veteran of Sussex County Emergency Medical Services, beginning her service in July 2003. Prior to coming to Sussex County, she worked for the Kent County paramedic program, beginning in 2001.

In addition to her paramedic shift duties, Paramedic Callaway also served as a field training officer, as well as a spokeswoman for the department. Additionally, she was president of the Sussex County Paramedic Association.

A native of the Georgetown area, she attended Delaware Technical & Community College, and earned her bachelor’s of science degree in emergency medical services management from George Washington University. She is survived by her husband and two children.

Colleagues gathered this morning to recall their fondest memories of Paramedic Callaway, who was remembered warmly as a “consummate professional” who was easy to talk to and who always had a positive outlook.

“Stephanie was the type of person, no matter the situation, who would smile and respond, ‘It’s all good,’ ” said paramedic and fellow EMS public information officer Joseph P. Hopple. “Even now, she would find a way to see the good in something as tragic as this.”

Grief counselors have been brought in to console co-workers, Director Luedtke said. Meantime, staff duty assignments are being adjusted to accommodate those employees who were close to Ms. Callaway. Offers of assistance have poured in from neighboring departments, including New Castle County, Kent County, Caroline County, Md., and Ocean City, Md., paramedics.

“Our family is gathering around us and that’s how we’ll get through this,” Director Luedtke said. “It will be tough, but somehow we will get through it.”

County Administrator David B. Baker has ordered all County flags to be lowered to half-staff until further notice. Mr. Baker said the entire County government is saddened by the loss of one of its own.

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“People don’t realize the dangers that are involved in this profession sometimes,” Mr. Baker said. “What has happened here today certainly drives that home for all of us.”

Funeral arrangements for Paramedic Callaway are pending. Meantime, the State Police investigation continues.

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Media calls should be directed to Delaware State Police spokesman Sgt. Josh Bushweller at (302) 531-6522, or Sussex County spokesman Chip Guy at (302) 854-5000.