



The Public Works First Responder Symbol

In recognition of the tireless efforts of Public Works First Responders nationwide, the American Public Works Association (APWA) has created the Public Works First Responder symbol, a unifying emblem that represents this community of dedicated Public Works professionals to the public and raises awareness of the critical role they play in emergency response and management. This symbol can be displayed on Public Works vehicles, equipment, gear (like helmets and vests), clothing – anywhere it is appropriate and visible, and we encourage Public Works First Responders to use the symbol as a way to explain the invaluable role they play in emergency response.



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PUBLIC WORKS FIRST RESPONDERS



The backbone of Chesapeake's infrastructure



What is a First Responder?

When you hear First Responder, what comes to mind? For most, the term invokes visions of police cars, fire trucks, and ambulances with sirens blaring and lights flashing, and brave law enforcement officers, firefighters, and EMTs darting into danger to save life and limb.

That's an entirely correct definition of a first responder. However, it is not entirely complete.

Think of your daily life, and all the mechanisms that work in the background to ensure you get where you're going safely and on time, such as clear roadways and bridges. Think about the services you use every single day that provide comfort, security and sustenance, like running water. Think about the myriad public facilities you and your families utilize, and the convenience, value and security it adds to your life.



Now, imagine not having access to those critical pieces of infrastructure. What happens when a major winter storm dumps inches upon inches of snow and ice onto your area? What about torrential rains that cause waters to rise rapidly? How about water main breaks that deprive you and your family of clean, safe water for drinking, cooking and hygiene?

Worse even, in the event of a structural disaster or terrorist attack, who responds to clear away rubble and debris and stabilize buildings? Who is responsible for keeping all this running smoothly, and fixing it rapidly when it is not?

Enter the Public Works First Responder

Public Works First Responders are the backbone of our community's infrastructure, teams of skilled engineers, technicians, and specialists who respond at a moment's notice, recover the scene of the incident, and restore important infrastructure and services when emergencies happen.

Public Works First Responders are as critical to first response as public safety personnel. For example, imagine a major snow event is forecast to inundate the area. Public Works personnel plan and prepare for the weather through snow and ice mitigation programs before and during the storm. This around-the-clock response keeps the most vital arteries open to traffic, allowing public safety officials to navigate the area to respond to emergencies, as well as opening up travel lanes to help citizens reach hospitals or shelters.

Public Works First Responders understand the ecosystems that we live amongst and are prepared to intervene when nature goes off the rails, responding to rapidly mitigate flooded roadways and public infrastructure, keeping traffic moving and protecting not only property, but also potentially saving lives.

Public Works First Responders deploy to tackle emergency interruptions to

public services, like water and sewer. Not having access to safe running water or becoming exposed to raw sewage can quickly become life-threatening situations. Public Works First Responders bring their know-how, proficiency and preparedness to quickly resolve these dangerous situations whenever and wherever they occur.

Public Works First Responders understand the important role City facilities -- our courthouses, community centers and libraries, water towers and treatment plants, police and fire stations, emergency shelters, government administration buildings, and more -- play in the lives of citizens each day, as well as the dangers that compromised structures pose when impacted by natural disasters, accidents, or even terrorist attacks.



When these emergencies happen, Public Works First Responders deploy to assess and take action to stabilize and recover infrastructure, helping public safety responders to perform critical rescue operations and start the road to restoring things back to normal.

It's not glamorous, and it's definitely most often dirty work, but its importance cannot be denied. The efforts of Public Works First Responders represent an essential function in protecting our citizens and communities that no other agency provides.