

Lentz is the committee chair and program architect for **Future First Responders of Montgomery County**, a state-funded, two-year pilot program designed to create a direct pathway from technical education into careers in public safety.

The program launched September 2, 2026, bringing together the county's four technical career centers and the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety.

Selected high school seniors attending public safety related programs participate three days a week at the Montgomery County Public Safety Training Center. The program provides the opportunity to pursue certifications as a Firefighter I, Emergency Medical Technician and telecommunicator.

The idea is straightforward: introduce young people to public safety careers while they are still in high school, provide meaningful training and certifications, and create a pathway into the workforce.

Lentz helped spend approximately two years developing the program and bringing together educators, public safety leaders, fire and EMS officials and the county training center.

North Montco students also have the

opportunity to participate in hands-on workshops at Lower Providence, learning practical firefighting and rescue skills.

For Lentz, these programs are about more than recruitment.

They are about creating opportunities.

A young person who may not have the financial resources to immediately attend college can gain valuable certifications, earn money through volunteer staffing opportunities and begin building a career in public safety.

The fire service can become both a service opportunity and a pathway to a profession. These programs not only support our community, but build on the foundation of personnel for career opportunities both local and abroad. Our firefighters are trained to the national standards through accredited agencies and include expanded opportunities such the acquisition of EMT, preparing them for career all while serving our community. More often than not, municipalities seek pre-qualified candidates for positions, and these programs create a pool of candidates for advancement. In return, many of our personnel work full-time elsewhere but serve here at home in their off time, enhancing the

experience levels of our first responders in many ways, providing a win-win-win.

Leadership Beyond the Firehouse

Lentz's commitment to emergency services extends well beyond his two primary fire departments.

Since 2019, he has served with Montgomery County Special Operations as a member of the Incident Support Team, providing command support and operational advice during complex and multi-agency incidents.

He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Montgomery County Hero Fund, a nonprofit organization supporting Montgomery County first responders and their families following line-of-duty tragedy. He is also co-chair of the annual Montgomery County Heroes Festival.

His professional credentials include a bachelor's degree in Public Safety Administration and extensive fire, emergency management, incident command, fire prevention, investigation, instruction, hazardous materials and emergency medical certifications.

His experience includes command under the Incident Command System, emergency management and Emergency Operations Center operations, fire inspections, labor relations, budget and capital planning, grants and interagency coordination.

It is a breadth of experience that allows him to look at the fire service not simply from the perspective of responding to the next call, but from the perspective of building an organization that will be ready for the next decade.

Measuring Success

For Lentz, modernization is not about change for the sake of change. It is about whether those changes actually improve service to the community.

At Lower Providence, the numbers tell part of that story.

The department has grown 60 percent and



calls have increased 26 percent.

The department has also reported improvements in response performance, with average response times approximately 49 percent faster, along with a 10 percent improvement in its Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating.

Behind those numbers are leaders, more trained firefighters and more available personnel providing more opportunities to respond and a department structured to meet the needs of a growing and changing community.

Lentz is quick to move the spotlight away from himself when discussing those accomplishments.

That team approach is central to his leadership philosophy.

"The people that I have the privilege to work with, and the other leaders in the fire department, are absolutely amazing," he stated. "These chiefs, keep me on track. We have no 'Yes Men.' It's their straightforward thinking and together 150+ years of experience that make us strong. I'll put this team up against any other in the county, and they never let down."

"The rank and file of these people are the ones who really do it every day, train hard and never say no. I wish everyone in our community understood who and what they have serving them." Chief Lentz exclaimed.

Lentz added, "There is nothing more satisfying than watching a rookie firefighter mature in the

business and seeing them thrive."

Modern equipment matters. Funding matters. Training matters. Response times matter.

But none of those things happen without people.

The Future of the Fire Service

After nearly 40 years in the fire service, Lentz has seen the profession change dramatically.

He believes the future of volunteers will depend on the willingness of departments to change with it.

That does not mean abandoning the traditions that built volunteer fire companies. It means finding new ways to make those traditions work in today's world.

It means regionalized response rather than working in isolation.

It means scheduled staffing rather than relying solely on firefighters to leave their homes or jobs when a call comes in.

It means investing in training and giving people meaningful opportunities to use their skills.

It means reaching students before they graduate and showing them that public safety can provide a career, an education and a way to serve their community.

And it means recognizing that the fire service has something valuable to offer people at many different stages of life.

It also means that if organizations cannot meet the demands of today that communities must modify their

delivery models.

The numbers at Lower Providence demonstrate what can happen when a department embraces that philosophy.

In just five years, the number of certified firefighters has increased from 28 to 45. The department is responding to hundreds more calls each year, while building a larger and more highly trained response force.

For Lentz, however, the most important statistic may not be found on a spreadsheet.

It is the firefighter who decides to walk through the firehouse doors.

It is the kid who discovers a calling.

It is the experienced firefighter who stays because the firehouse has become a second home.

Jim Lentz joined the fire service at 16 because he wanted to help.

Nearly four decades later, he is still doing exactly that—responding to emergencies, mentoring the next generation, building partnerships, modernizing operations and

helping communities prepare for the challenges ahead.

His story is ultimately not just about one firefighter or one department.

It is about what can happen when a community invests in its fire department volunteers, when leaders are willing to adapt, and when people continue to answer the call.

The future of the fire service may look different than it did in 1987. But the reason people join remains remarkably the same; to help when their neighbors need them most.

If you are interested in more information to become involved with the Lower Providence Fire Department and serving your community, visit lpfire.com.

Life in Lower Providence

Lentz has fond memories of growing up in Lower Providence and graduating from Methacton High School. Today, he continues building memories here with his wife, Jennifer and daughters, Madilyn and Marissa.



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