

## MIDDLETOWN

## Ground broken for emergency substation

*The substations building should be completed in about a year.*

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When rushing a fire truck or ambulance to an emergency scene, one rule always applies: The closer the starting point, the better.

That's why the mood was so festive Tuesday when a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the North Middletown Emergency Services Substations building, to be constructed on a 3-acre corner of the township-owned Styer property on Langhorne-Yardley Road.

The \$2.8 million structure will house a 7,158 square-foot substation for the Langhorne-Middletown Fire Company and a 5,600 square-foot substation for the Penn-del-Middletown Emergency Squad, all in one building split into two wings. It's being funded by Middletown from a \$10 million bond issue passed by the supervisors in 2006.

The substations will put ambulances and fire equipment closer to people in that area, and that's always important in emergency services, where time can mean saving lives, officials at the groundbreaking said.

"It should definitely improve response time and let us get our first truck to the scene faster," said Langhorne-Middletown Fire Chief Frank Farry. "Start of construction is the beginning of the end of a long journey that started about five years ago."

Actually, there's been talk about substations in the northern part of Middletown for about 15 years, said Penn-del-Middletown Emergency Squad Chief Brent McLaughlin. Several options were tried and abandoned before serious planning started at the Styer location, he said.

"It's gone on through about four chiefs, so I'm just the one who will be around when it's finished," McLaughlin said. "We've already been operating out of a temporary building here for about two years, and it's improved response times in this area by about two or three minutes. The permanent substation should make things even better."

Penn-del-Middletown's main station is on Business Route 1 in Middletown, and Langhorne-Middletown's main station is on Maple Avenue in Langhorne, both several miles from the Styer property.

"This has been a long time coming and a long-held dream of both the fire company and emergency squad," said township supervisors Chairman Robert McMonagle of the substations. "I'm glad we're ready to go."

The substations building should take about a year to complete, said James Linske, the architect working on the project.