

## 'Worst day in department's history'

*Middletown police officers said their colleague Chris Jones was a dedicated officer with a fine family.*

By **CHRIS ENGLISH**  
**STAFF WRITER**

One day before his retirement, with tears welling in his eyes and struggling to keep his composure, Middletown Police Chief Frank McKenna stood at a microphone at St. Mary Medical Center Thursday and gave the press conference he thought he'd never have to give.

One of his officers, Chris Jones, had just died in the line of duty. That's a first for Middletown, said McKenna, a township cop for 51 years, the last 20 as chief.

"It's the worst day of my career," he said. "It's like losing a son. Chris Jones was a dedicated police officer and every one of us will feel this loss. Chris was a very people-oriented individual and I've received so many comments over the years about his ability to care for and comfort people."

Jones, 37, died when a threecar accident on the northbound side of the Route 1 Superhighway in Middletown pinned him under his own patrol car. Jones had stopped a motorist for speeding between the southbound and northbound exits for I-95, said McKenna, who added that the accident is still under investigation.

The accident occurred about 10:40 a.m. Thursday and Jones, a 10-year veteran of the Middletown force, was pronounced dead at about 12:30 p.m. at the St. Mary trauma center, said McKenna.

Lt. Patrick McGinty said Jones was on a list of township officers to be considered for promotion to detective.

"I had just recently discussed with Chris the possibility of him being moved up," said McGinty. "He was just a fine officer with a fine family and he will be missed greatly. This is the worst day in our department's history, definitely."

Tullytown Police Chief Patrick Priore and Lower Makefield Chief Ken Coluzzi stood by at the hospital while doctors were working to save Jones' life and the two chiefs then attended the press conference.

"When a police officer dies in the line of duty, it's just horrible," said Priore. Coluzzi said one of his Lower Makefield officers, Cpl. Timothy Reeves, was one of the first to arrive on the scene and attempted to get Jones out from under the patrol car before ambulances arrived.

"Tim did everything he could to try to save Officer Jones' life and he's just devastated," said Coluzzi. A former Philadelphia cop, Coluzzi has attended several funerals for Philadelphia officers killed in the line of duty over the last two years.

Jones is the first Lower Bucks officer to be killed on duty since Newtown Officer Brian Gregg was shot and killed by Robert Flor at the St. Mary emergency room on Sept. 29, 2005.

"Now we're faced with another one," said Coluzzi. "It's a sad day for the entire police community and the citizens of Bucks County."

Jones is survived by his wife, Suzanne, and three children, Christopher, 16, Julianne, 13, and Brendan, 12. The family lives in the Penndel section of Middletown.

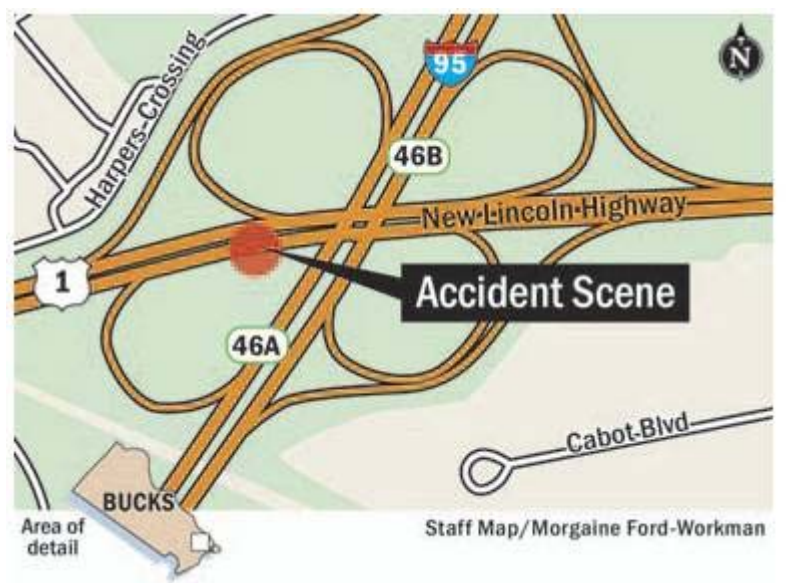
Since the accident directly involved a Middletown officer, it is being investigated by outside agencies, said McKenna. Bristol Township and Falls police are investigating with help from state police, he said.

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Police Chiefs Patrick Priorie (left) of Tullytown and Barry Pilla (right) of Northampton offer support to Middletown Police Chief Frank McKenna on Thursday as McKenna answers questions about the death of Officer Chris Jones. McKenna said losing Jones was like losing a son. KIM WEIMER / **STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**





Police investigate the crash on Route 1 that fatally injured Middletown police Officer Chris Jones on Thursday morning. ART GENTILE / **STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**



Frank McKenna