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Bridge work in Amity Township will close major route for fire trucks

Main Street project could take 9 months; school bus routes also will be affected.

By Rebecca VanderMeulen
Reading Eagle

An upcoming bridge project in Amity Township will cut off Monarch Fire Company's main route to a large section of the township.

In response, the fire company is looking for a place to keep two of its six trucks.

Fire authorities said there is enough time to plan for the closure, which could last nine months.

They don't anticipate the problem becoming a safety issue.

The bridge work also will force some Daniel Boone school buses to be rerouted.

Repairs to the bridge that carries Main Street in Monocacy over the Monocacy Creek could start this fall or in spring 2010, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

The work is estimated to take six to nine months and cost \$2.5 million to \$3 million.

The work will cut off Monarch's access to Monocacy Creek Road, the primary route to parts of Amity Township on the northern side of Route 422.

Monarch's firehouse is on Pennsylvania Avenue, which is 300 to 400 feet from the creek bridge.

An assistant chief might keep one in his garage at Route 422 and Limekiln Road.

Chief Brian D. Gabel said the company is searching for another storage spot, preferably close to Route 422.

Main Street in Monocacy is a connector between Route 422 and Route 724.

Some buses use it to transport students to Daniel Boone schools.

New Rhoads Transportation, which runs school buses for the district, is working on a plan but has not come up with specifics.

"When it happens, we'll reroute around it," said Kathy Rhoads, the company's transportation director.

Amity Township also is served by Amity Fire Company, which is on the northern side of Route 422.

Chief Matthew Richter said the company is considering adding storage space for its own equipment and doesn't have room for the Monarch trucks.

PennDOT considers the bridge to be structurally deficient. Some of the support beams need to be replaced.

Monarch's Gabel said he supports the bridge project even though it will cause an inconvenience for the fire department.

"The bridge needs repairs," he said. "It's just kind of upsetting that it takes six to nine months."

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<http://itsamity.com/Monarch.html>