



National Association of State EMS Officials

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News Release

The National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials (NASEMSO) to honor the Pioneers of Freedom House Ambulance at Annual Meeting

February 14, 2024 (Falls Church, Va.) The National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials (NASEMSO) is honored to host the pioneers of Freedom House Ambulance at the [NASEMSO Annual Meeting, May 12-16, 2024, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania](#). The groundbreaking ambulance service operated in Pittsburgh from 1967 to 1975, setting the standard for emergency medical services (EMS) today. The nation's first paramedics were Black men recruited from and serving the racially segregated Hill District of Pittsburgh. Several of these individuals who still walk among us will be honored at a special luncheon on May 15 at the Omni William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh.

The concept behind Freedom House Ambulance was the brainchild of Dr. Peter Safar, who was also known as the "father of CPR." Dr. Safar's vision of highly trained EMS personnel performing advanced lifesaving care was brought to a new level after he convinced Dr. Nancy Caroline to accept the medical director role. Dr. Caroline's dedication to Freedom House Ambulance led to a host of advanced medical procedures now routinely performed by paramedics, including what is believed to be the first endotracheal intubation performed in the field by EMS. Despite its integral role in EMS history, Freedom House Ambulance has been mostly forgotten over time.

The story of the nation's first paramedics has seen a resurgence in interest with the 2022 publication of [American Sirens](#), a book by former paramedic and author Kevin Hazzard that documents this vital but overlooked part of history. Recently, Pittsburgh's EMS Chief Amera Gilchrist, the City's first Black chief, launched the [Freedom House EMT Academy](#), where city residents may apply for paid positions to undergo the required training and become certified as an EMT to work as a member of the City's ambulance service. Chief Gilchrist, along with local, state, and national dignitaries, will share in celebrating the legacy of Freedom House Ambulance on May 15th.

Information about the NASEMSO Annual Meeting and Freedom House Commemorative Luncheon is available at [Celebrating the Freedom House Legacy at NASEMSO 2024](#).

The National Association of State EMS Officials is a leading national organization for EMS, a respected voice for national EMS policy with comprehensive concern and commitment for the development of effective, integrated, community-based, universal, and consistent EMS systems. Its members are the leaders of their state and territory EMS systems.

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