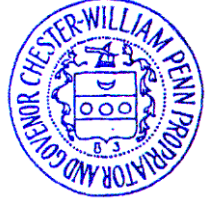




THE COUNTY OF CHESTER



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EDITORS: The following is for immediate release. If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Brain, Communications Coordinator for Chester County, at 610-344-6279 or rbrain@chesco.org, or Patty Mains, Chester County Department of Emergency Services Public Information Officer at 610-344-5150 or pmains@chesco.org.

Photo caption: (From left to right, front row) Robert Kagel, Director, Chester County Department of Emergency Services; Chester County Commissioner Terence Farrell; County Commissioner Kathi Cozzone; Jack Law, West Bradford Fire Chief and Chester County Fire Chiefs Association; John Sly, John Sly Grantwriting; John Weer, Chester County Fire Marshal; B.J. Meadowcroft, Union Fire Company of Oxford; County Commissioner Michelle Kichline, Beau Crowding, Deputy Director of Fire Services, Chester County Department of Emergency Services; Congressman Ryan Costello; (from left to right, back row) Mike Holmes, Chief, Lionville Fire Company; Dave Jones, West Whiteland Fire Company; Ron Miller, President, Chester County Fire Police Association; and Steve Nuse, Chief, Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company.

Chester County firefighters receive half-a-million dollar federal grant for radio purchases



WEST CHESTER, PA_ Twelve Chester County fire companies will soon be better equipped to operate on the Chester County Department of Emergency Services' new voice radio system thanks to two Federal grant awards issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

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Lionville Fire Company acted as a host applicant for one grant application to benefit fire companies along the Main Line and eastern areas of the County, while the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company of Unionville hosted a grant to benefit the County's southern communities. Together, the two grant awards total \$500,000. These grants were obtained through the Federal Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) Grant Program which issues grants to enhance the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards by providing direct financial assistance to eligible fire departments.

Former County Commissioner and current United States Congressman Ryan Costello helped to announce the grant awards. "Upgrading radio equipment and improving communications capabilities during real emergencies will make our communities safer and hopefully will make the difficult jobs of our dedicated emergency responders a little less dangerous," said Congressman Costello. "I fully supported modernizing Chester County's 911 communications system during my tenure as county commissioner and know that the County's Department of Emergency Services, local fire companies and emergency medical services leaders have worked tirelessly implementing the new system. This grant is absolutely essential to continuing their work and providing our emergency responders the resources needed to serve and protect residents in southeastern Pennsylvania."

In February 2013, the Chester County Commissioners signed a contract with Harris Corporation for the purchase, installation, and maintenance of a new \$42.1 million digital radio system which replaced analog equipment from the early 1990s. In doing so, the Commissioners included the purchase of a select number of radios for volunteer firefighters and emergency responders.

Chester County Commissioners' Chair Terence Farrell said, "Chester County's emergency responders received a much needed upgrade in critical, life-saving communications with the new Harris APCO P25 Phase 2 Digital Voice Radio System. Our emergency responders now have a state-of-the-art emergency communications system and equipment, providing 99.8% portable, on-street radio coverage and improved in-building coverage. Providing this new system and equipment is one of the many ways we ensure a safe and secure county."

County Commissioner Kathi Cozzone added: "We continue to show our commitment to public safety by making critical investments in our emergency responders, as outlined in our strategic plan. We were pleased to provide radio equipment to operate on the new Harris Voice Radio System and we are equally pleased to support other public safety projects like the new Computer Aided Dispatch System and the Public Safety Training Campus."

County Commissioner Michelle Kichline also acknowledged the importance of these grants from a fiscal perspective. "As a former township supervisor, I understand the financial impact of supporting public safety. The new radio equipment removed a \$9 million dollar impact from our municipalities. I am grateful to the fire companies for easing the financial impact to our municipalities and citizens even further by pursuing grants to supplement the County's allocation of radios," Kichline said.

"Every firetruck in the County was issued at least three portable radios, but some vehicles carry more than three firefighters," said Bobby Kagel, Director of Emergency Services for Chester County. "It is important for every firefighter to be able to communicate with one another at an incident scene." Several fire companies purchased additional radios while others sought grant opportunities to help offset the costs.

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Lionville Fire Company acted as the “host” applicant on behalf of the Paoli Fire Company, Malvern Fire Company, Radnor Fire Company, East Whiteland Fire Company, and West Whiteland Fire Company. They will receive a total of 84 new portable radios at a cost of \$2,500 each.

“This news couldn’t come at a better time as we have recently transitioned to our County’s new radio system,” said Lionville Fire Chief Michael Holmes. “Every one of our firefighters will now be equipped with a radio.”

Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company was the host of the grant application awarded to benefit firefighters from the Union Fire Company of Oxford, West Grove Fire Company, Avondale Fire Company, Kennett Fire Company, and Longwood Fire Company. Together, they will receive \$290,000 for the purchase of 116 radios. Earlier in the year, the Honey Brook Fire Company also received a \$33,000 grant from the same grant program for more radios.

Po-Mar-Lin Fire Chief Stephen Nuse said “Interoperability is extremely important. Several of our local departments routinely operate with firefighters in other counties and even other states. The ability for all of us to be able to communicate with one another is paramount.”

Each of these grant applications were written and developed by John Sly, a local Chester County volunteer firefighter who owns a professional grant writing firm. “I personally know the struggles we as volunteers face in order to raise money for the equipment we need to do our jobs,” Sly said. “These grants are a tremendous help and relief to ensure for our own safety – I’m very proud to have helped to bring this Federal money to a local level. This is a great example of our Federal, County, and local officials working together for the benefit of our communities,” Sly added.

In Fiscal Year 2015 FEMA’s Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program will award approximately \$340 million directly to fire departments and non-affiliated EMS organizations nationwide to enhance their response capabilities and to more effectively protect the health and safety of the public and emergency response personnel with respect to fire and all other hazards.

Since the inception of the AFG program in 2001, Chester County fire companies have received more than \$12.6 million in Federal grant funds for equipment and vehicles. Each year, more than 10,000 grant applications are received and an average of only 2,000 are funded.

The primary goal of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant is to meet the firefighting and emergency response needs of fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical service organizations. Since 2001, AFG has helped firefighters and other first responders to obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources needed to protect the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is administered by the department's Directorate for Preparedness through its Office of Grants and Training in cooperation with the United States Fire Administration, also a division of the Preparedness Directorate.

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