



# NEWS RELEASE

**United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development**

**World Wide Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>**

**Ben Higgins, State Director**

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## **USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT AIDS FIRST RESPONDERS IN TULARE COUNTY**

*Over \$60,000 delivered to rural communities throughout county*

DAVIS, Calif., April 30, 2007 – From turnout gear to an aerial surveillance drone, USDA Rural Development State Director Benjamin Higgins announced today funding for two first responder projects in Tulare County. This funding, totaling \$61,239, will enhance the capabilities of fire departments and law enforcement in rural communities throughout the county.

“These grants reflect our ongoing commitment to ensuring that small communities in rural areas have the tools they need to keep people and property safe,” said Higgins. “These grants make a big difference in these communities, by providing basic needs, like body armor for police officers, turnout gear for fire fighters, or medical equipment for search and rescue agencies.”

In the last five years, USDA Rural Development has invested more than \$54 million in California to augment the capabilities of first responders in rural areas. These funds have been used by rural communities to purchase, among other critical items, police cars, fire trucks, emergency rescue equipment and communications devices.

In addition to the grants in Tulare County listed below, USDA Rural Development has announced seven other projects totaling over \$350,000 in other rural communities throughout California.

\$44,250 to the District Attorney’s Office to assist with the purchase of an aerial surveillance drone for the prevention of agricultural-related crime.

\$16,989 to the City of Lindsay to assist with the purchase of turnout gear for the city fire department.

Higgins noted that USDA Rural Development makes investments in a variety of areas. “Today it’s law enforcement and fire equipment, but throughout the year we’re assisting communities with water infrastructure, broadband access, hospitals, schools, housing, local economic development and much more. Our investments are truly providing a better future for rural California.”

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Additional grants to rural first responders will be made in fiscal year 2007. Interested communities should contact the USDA Rural Development office in Visalia, Calif. at (559) 734-8732.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$76 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 1.5 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at one of California's 25 local USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>.

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**"Committed to the future of rural communities"**  
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