

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTS THE MISSISSIPPI COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD IN OBTAINING NEEDED EQUIPMENT

Missouri Rural Development State Director Morris Westfall, elected officials and Rural Development staff were present on Thursday, September 18, 2008, at the Mississippi County Rescue Squad Headquarters to view newly purchased turn out gear obtained by the Rescue Squad. USDA Rural Development provided \$10,312 in federal funding to help the squad purchase the equipment that will aid in the response to emergency calls they respond to.

U.S. Senator Christopher “Kit” Bond said, “While rescue squad volunteers are critical to saving lives in small communities, proper rescue equipment is critical to each volunteer. I commend the Mississippi County leadership and the USDA Rural Development staff for their dedication and hard work to make this project a reality.”

The Mississippi County Rescue Squad assists the Mississippi County Ambulance District, Mississippi County Sheriff’s Department, Missouri State Highway Patrol and the police departments of Charleston and East Prairie. The squad presently has turn out gear that is 10 years old, and only enough gear to outfit five persons. When called to an accident, the person responding to the call may not be in possession of a full set of gear which puts the safety of the personnel at risk. The Rescue Squad has also resorted to using personal cell phones to communicate with each other during emergency calls due to the lack of handheld radios. The funding provided by USDA Rural Development has allowed the squad to purchase ten full sets of turn out gear along with handheld radios for faster, more reliable communication in the event of an emergency.

“When Missourians are generous enough to volunteer their time to protect their community, we need to ensure they have safe and functioning equipment,” U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill said. “This federal funding will help the Mississippi County Rescue Squad protect volunteer first responders and help them do their jobs the best they can.”

“Equipment and communications gear are essential to a rural Rescue Squad’s effectiveness and the speed of their response to emergencies. Mississippi County is a particularly unique case, as it is located well within the New Madrid Seismic Zone, where the risk of a major earthquake poses a severe threat. The ability of emergency responders to deploy and to help those in need is key -- in that situation and in hundreds of other scenarios these men and women face every day in their dangerous service to our communities,” said U.S. Representative Jo Ann Emerson.

The funding for the turn out gear is provided through USDA Rural Development’s Community Facilities (CF) Program. In addition to turn out gear, the CF loan and grant program also provides funding to help rural communities finance essential community facilities, health services, and the



Pictured left to right: Keith Coots, Rescue Squad; Homer Oliver, Commissioner; Teri Rapert, Rescue Squad; Charlie Marcum, Chief Deputy; Cathy Walters, Rural Development Specialist; Ken Story, Rescue Squad; Morris Westfall, Rural Development State Director; Denis Rapert, Asst. Director, Rescue Squad; Danny Harris, Director, Rescue Squad; Greg Heppe, Rescue Squad Board Member; Keith Moore, Sheriff; Steven Hicks, Rescue Squad

purchase of equipment which will provide vital services to rural residents. Some examples include financing an ambulance, warning sirens, fire fighting equipment, police cars, jaws-of-life, rescue vehicle, 911 dispatch center, justice center, abuse center, public safety building, medical clinics and hospitals.

“This kind of assistance mirrors USDA Rural Development’s mission and being committed to the future of rural communities,” said Westfall. “Appreciation is extended to our Federal elected officials for supporting USDA Rural Development. They have been strong proponents for the necessary funding for essential services for rural Missourians.”

Further information regarding any of the USDA Rural Development programs is available by contacting the Charleston Rural Development Office at cathy.walters@mo.usda.gov or by calling 573-649-9947, ext. 4. Rural Development’s web site is: www.rurdev.usda.gov/mo.

"Committed to the future of rural communities."

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