



Montgomery County, Virginia Tech Rescue Squad partner on grant to fund Virginia Tech regional strategic radio cache

By Mark Owczarski

BLACKSBURG, Va., January 6, 2009 -- The Virginia Tech Rescue Squad and the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Services recently received a \$850,000 grant from the Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinators Office to establish a regional strategic radio cache system.

The radio cache consisting of 200-300 portable radios reserved for use by public safety personnel in an emergency situation will be the fourth such collection of communications equipment in the commonwealth supported by the Virginia State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC).

The grant also provides interoperability equipment such as gateway devices and portable repeaters used to supplement and connect existing communications infrastructure.

First responders at Virginia Tech will benefit because emergency services personnel will communicate more easily with each other and with surrounding jurisdictions. In addition to emergency use, the radios will be used during athletic and other special events that attract thousands of visitors to campus in an effort to provide better coordinated and more efficient service to the university.

Additionally the cache will be available to the Virginia Emergency Operations Center and will be available for for deployment to other regions in Virginia or other parts of the nation.

“A requirement of the grant is the establishment of a multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline team of communications experts led by Virginia Tech Rescue Squad,” said Matthew Johnson, squad captain. “This self-sufficient team will be capable of rapidly deploying to a locality and establishing a radio system usable by public safety and first responders when disasters occur. Examples of deployment would be a hurricane on the eastern shore or a manhunt where disparate or damaged radio systems need to be supplemented in order to function properly — essentially anywhere we’re needed, we will go.”

Established in 1969, the Virginia Tech Rescue Squad is the emergency medical service agency serving the campus of Virginia Tech. It is a volunteer student-run organization committed to providing exceptional emergency medical services to the university community. Virginia Tech Rescue Squad maintains three advanced life support ambulances and a first response vehicle with in-station crews ready for service 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The agency relies heavily on private donations from members of the university and extended community to fund technological upgrades and capital improvements to better provide this service to Virginia Tech at no cost. All members of the squad receive Virginia State Emergency Medical Technician certification.

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