

**SPEECH AS WRITTEN FOR DELIVERY BY
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ADMINISTRATOR
PIPELINE & HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE HMEP GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT
IRWIN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
518-526 WESTERN AVENUE
IRWIN, PA
@ 12:00 P.M.**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2006

Thank you Chief Gray for that very kind introduction and for hosting our grant announcement today.

I would also like to thank

- Congressman Tim Murphy
- Mayor Dan Rose
- Dick Chorba, Director, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, and
- Richard Matason, Director, Westmoreland County Department of Public Safety

for participating in our event.

I am here today because Congressman Tim Murphy told me about the outstanding first responder team you have here in Irwin. He has high praise for the volunteer fire fighters, and the close working relationship you have with the Westmoreland County Department of Public Safety.

You and your fellow fire fighters are the unsung heroes who ensure the safety of Western Pennsylvania citizens in responding to incidents involving hazardous materials. So, on behalf of the Bush Administration, and Acting Transportation Secretary Maria Cino, I'd like to tell you that we greatly appreciate the dedication of the first responder community for risking your lives every day.

I am also here today to announce a DOT Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant to the State of Pennsylvania in the amount of \$404,762 dollars. This grant will fund hazardous materials emergency preparedness planning and training activities for first responders at the state, county and local level.

I've learned that Westmoreland County used past HMEP Grant funding in a number of ways including the completion of rail and highway hazardous materials commodity flow studies, which report what goods are moving through the area.

Additionally, there are currently 17 county fire fighters in training for their Hazmat Technician Certification using these funds. And in December, other county first responders will take part in a railroad exercise that will further strengthen their hazmat emergency response skills involving rail tank cars.

This is exactly what the HMEP Grants Program was established to do..., to improve the safety and security of our communities by providing funding for hazmat training and preparedness. Thank you, Congressman Murphy, for your strong leadership in Congress to ensure that this Program is fully funded and available to our first responders.

Congressman Murphy is also a sponsor of the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act now making its way through Congress. This legislation would greatly strengthen federal oversight of the nation's oil and natural gas pipelines by providing additional funds to our state partners. It also allows for tougher enforcement to folks that dig around pipelines and damage them without notifying the appropriate emergency officials.

All Americans will benefit when these additional pipeline safety requirements are signed into law by President Bush.

The safe and secure transportation of hazardous materials is a big job, and the Federal government can't do it alone. We rely heavily on the trained and fearless group of professional fire fighters, police, and other first responders found in local volunteer fire departments, like the one here in Irwin.

Our hope is that the funds we provide to Pennsylvania continues to trickle down to the county and local community emergency preparedness units that need the hazmat training and planning the most.

Together with the help of your representatives in Congress, and the brave men and women on the front lines of emergency response, we can advance the safety and security of our transportation systems.

Now I would like to offer the floor to Congressman Tim Murphy.